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A TEXT-BOOK

FOR THE

STUDY OF POETRY

BY

F. M. CONNELL, S.J.

PROFESSOR OF POETRY, ST. ANDREW-ON-HUDSON

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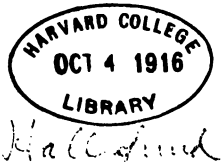

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is not to furnish instruction in the art of verse-making, but rather to set forth the fundamental principles of criticism by which to form some estimate of acknowledged poetry. It has been truly said that in order to judge a poem, it is first necessary to enjoy it. This susceptibility to poetry, so far as it is communicable at all, must come from contact with the living teacher, and neither this nor any other book is calculated to awaken it. But once awakened the taste may be educated, as it may be vitiated; it may be developed, controlled, directed into right channels; and this may be done efficaciously, by principles and precepts, provided that they are not learned as abstractions, but tested and realized in the student's own reading.

The low esteem in which poetry is often held in our day seems, at least in part, to proceed from a misconception of its office. It is regarded merely as a pastime for dilettanti, or a solace for the leisure hours of the sentimental, and this conception is fostered by such criticism as lays undue stress on mere form or style, as if the appeal of poetry resided in the fascination of musical verse or felicitous diction. But poetry surely contains more for us than the allurement of words. More than any other form of literature, it creates our ideals, enriches our emotions, ennobles our reflections. More than any other form of literature, it puts us in communion with intense personalities, and so enlarges our horizon and liberates the soul from the narrow limits of

its own personal experiences. This it does in a direct way, but also indirectly, when the subject matter is not man, but nature. For to conceive loftily even of the "earth and sky and plain" exalts the soul and leaves us broader and better men. It is such a view of poetry that this book seeks to inculcate, by insisting, as of paramount importance, on what the poet says, his thought and his message, its truth and its worthiness.

We have remarked that our purpose was not to offer instruction in verse-making. However, though not an end in itself, as an aid to the appreciation of poetic expression, verse-making possesses no little value and should hold its time-honored place in the study of poetry. As some help to this, a chapter of practical detail on poetic diction with abundant illustration has been added by way of appendix.

In regard to the use of this book in the classroom the following suggestions may be offered. The two chapters on Versification and the added chapter on Poetic Diction should be studied before all others, and early in the year. The poetry read during the preparation of these sections will serve the purpose of awakening that first appreciation of poetic appeal spoken of above, and will also put the student in the way of trying his own hand at verse. Tennyson's poems and selections from Keats are recommended as the best subjects of study at this period. This part of the work should be done leisurely and at length; for the first chapters on the theory of poetry will be meaningless unless some idea of poetic effect be conceived before they are begun. The length of time devoted to the Definition of Poetry will depend entirely upon the capacity of the class to interest itself in an abstract discussion, and the subject may without detriment be briefly despatched. During the study of the second chapter, on the emotions, Shelley and Gray are recommended for reading, as being interesting contrasts in

the exhibition of emotion. Also for the sake of contrast, Milton (*Paradise Lost*), Spenser, and perhaps Coleridge may be studied for imagination, though for the dramatic imagination, Shakespeare is of course paramount. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and Wordsworth may be suggested to accompany the reading of the chapter on Thought in Poetry. The chapter on Expression, as will be observed, is abstract, and presumes some familiarity with the poets. Shakespeare and Milton are the supreme masters here; Pope, Keats, and Swinburne may be used to offset these in two different directions.

Finally, if the work seems oftentimes to dogmatize in dealing with subjects that are not in the least dogmas, it must be remembered in extenuation that this was the only possible course in a book of moderate dimensions. And if Ruskin's definition of poetry, which has been adopted for its serviceableness, should seem to some far from adequate, it may be remarked that to the author also it seems inadequate as does every other definition of poetry; and if it should prove less practically useful to others than it has proved to him, it is after all not indispensable to the principles which follow it in this book.

For the convenience of classes working together, the exercises, as far as possible, have been drawn from Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (revised edition) and from the poems of Tennyson.

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PART ONE

THE NATURE OF POETRY

CHAPTER I

The Definition of Poetry

When we ask ourselves what constitutes the essence of poetry, or what is its definition, we meet a question which criticism has failed to answer with anything like final satisfaction. This is not because critics disagree as to what literary productions deserve to be called poetry in the concrete, but because of the difficulty of grasping the abstract trait which precisely distinguishes the poem from what is not a poem. And yet if we are to study poetry systematically, it will be helpful to formulate some definition or quasi-definition, even though it be imperfect. To arrive at this definition is the object of the present chapter.

Preparatory to this, we may note one or two principles that are universally accepted.

In the first place, poetry is not synonymous with verse; that is, not everything written in verse is poetry. This needs only to be stated to become apparent, — though the converse, viz., whether everything we call poetry must be written in verse, is quite another question, and is variously answered. We reserve this for another place.

Secondly, it follows from this that we do not adequately divide literature into poetry and prose, but into verse and prose. What is not verse is prose; but we cannot say, whatever is not *poetry* is prose, there being a class of compositions which is neither the one nor the other, but mere verse. Indeed, we have no word to express the antithesis of poetry, *i.e.* what is not poetry. If we had, probably the definition of poetry itself would be solved by the word.

Assuming the above principles, we may approach our definition of poetry.

1. Poetry a Fine Art. — No one will question the statement that poetry is one of the fine arts. This places it in the category with painting, sculpture, and music. Now all the fine arts have for their distinctive object to express the beautiful. They are differentiated from one another by the means employed to reach this end. Thus:

Music expresses the beautiful by means of pure sound (melody and harmony);

Painting, by means of color and surface form;

Sculpture, by means of plastic form;

Poetry, by means of language.

This being true, we may define poetry to be *the art of giving expression to the beautiful through the medium of language.*

If this definition were satisfactory, the nature of poetry would not furnish a theme for endless discussion. But it is not satisfactory. Its insufficiency lies in the fact that the definition is not clearer than the thing defined. Poetry is the art of giving expression to the beautiful. But what is the beautiful? To answer this is the very problem we must face in defining the nature of poetry itself.

2. The Beautiful. — We may approach this question in the following way. We may begin by assuming a definition, or at least a description, of the beautiful. Next, we

may consider this definition as applied to objects admitted to be beautiful, and finally examine whether the said definition is applicable to all that the world has judged worthy to be called beautiful, and applicable to nothing else. If we find this to be the case, we may rest content that our definition is at least a working one.

3. A Noble Emotion. — We assume, then, hypothetically that an object is beautiful,—at least artistically beautiful, —*when the contemplation of it is calculated to awaken in us a noble emotion.*

We do not claim that this is a philosophical definition in the sense that it determines the essential and intrinsic attribute of beauty, but merely that it is coextensive with it; that is, that we find it applicable wherever we find beauty, and nowhere else. A beautiful object, then, is one that is calculated to awaken a noble emotion.

4. Not Mere Sense-gratification. — For, in the first place, we cannot admit into the category of the beautiful what merely gratifies the senses, say sight or hearing, and does no more. Let the painter spread his canvas with a meaningless array of colors, and, however delicate may be the shade, or however pleasing the blending, if it is mere color and nothing more, we cannot call the result beautiful. In the same way, a single chord of music sounded upon the organ may please the ear, and yet is not beautiful.

It is doubtless true that we do often apply the epithet, beautiful, to such colors and sounds as merely please the eye and ear. But this would seem to be an inaccurate, or at least an analogical use of the term; and for this reason. If we will consider how essentially different is the effect produced upon us by a painting of the seashore or a forest, and by the mere sense-gratification produced by any shade or combination of colors; or, again, if we try to realize the difference between the effect of a Beethoven symphony and

the pleasure given by a chord of music or succession of chords, we shall instantly realize that they belong to different categories. The difference is not merely a difference of intensity of pleasure, but a difference in the nature of the pleasure. The former is, properly speaking, beautiful; the latter is pleasing, but not beautiful in the strict sense of the term.

5. Not Merely "Unity and Variety." — As sense-gratification does not constitute the beautiful, so neither does the element of "unity amid variety." Symmetry, order, proportion, coördination of parts, are all manifestations of this "unity amid variety." Yet we may have all of these features in a geometrical diagram. We may find them more elaborately expressed in a musical composition that leaves us utterly unimpressed. It is not merely symmetry and proportion, therefore, that we admire in the lineaments of the human face or form, or in the parts of a flower, when we call either of these things beautiful, even though here, as before, the term may be loosely applied to such objects.

6. Conveys an Idea. — What, then, do we find in an object which we apprehend as beautiful, more than mere color or sound, and symmetry and proportion? We apprehend, it seems, several other things. We apprehend, first of all, an idea; our mind as well as our senses enter into the process. When a painter pictures a landscape, we call it beautiful because he conveys to us the idea of solitude, or desolation, or luxuriant life, or peace. When we call a sunset beautiful in a true sense, we do so because we read in its mysterious depths of distance an image of infinity, or in its lurid red an image of danger or doom. It is true, indeed, that for less-gifted mortals who are not poets, such ideas may be obscure and subconscious, and for this reason we require the artist to interpret our ideas, to emphasize the thought,

or, technically speaking, to *idealize* the scene, of which more hereafter. But the very fact that we require such idealization is evidence that the idea must speak to us as well as the color or the shape.

7. An Emotional Idea. — Yet it is obvious that not every idea will contribute to the constitution of the beautiful. A sunset may suggest the reflection that the days are growing longer, or to the weather-wise may image forth a clear day to-morrow, — conceptions that are neither beautiful nor poetical. We will, therefore, ask ourselves what kind of idea must this be, which enters into our conception of beauty. The answer seems to be that it must be an emotional idea; that is, an idea calculated to stir an emotion in the breast, — not any sort of emotion, however, as must be plain, but an *æsthetic* emotion.

8. A Noble Emotion. — Yet if we leave the matter here, we are as far off as ever from the solution of our question. For an æsthetic emotion is as difficult to define as the conception of beauty itself. It seems, we can reduce the matter to simpler terms. As a matter of fact, our emotions are usually very complex, compounded of many diverse impulses. But whenever an emotion is awakened that is *purely noble*, when it is purged of all the dross that tends to make it ignoble, and when such an emotion is stirred by an object addressing the senses or represented in the imagination, in that case we may term the said object beautiful.

9. What a Noble Emotion Is. — But this should appear more distinctly when we consider what we understand by a noble emotion. Such a familiar idea is more easily understood than defined, but in general we use the word in no technical or unusual sense, but simply of what uplifts and expands the heart, as opposed to what debases or depresses it. We exclude from the range of noble emotions —

1. All such as are base, immoral, vicious;
2. Such as are selfish or self-regarding, as self-love, envy, personal discontent;
3. Such as are purely sensuous;
4. Such as depress and narrow the soul, as personal fear, horror, dread;
5. Such as are trivial, as curiosity, mere interest, amusement.[1]

10. Definition Applied to Art. — An object then is beautiful which is calculated to excite such a noble emotion as has been described. To test this we might take our definition into the presence of the acknowledged masterpieces of art the world over. This is impossible within the limits of the present work. But whether we turn to the artists of the Renaissance and read in their work the expression of a "*joyful self-restraint*," or whether we find in the Gothic architecture of medievalism an image of "*religious enthusiasm*," or whether we diagnose Greek art as the embodiment of the two great emotional ideas of "*blithefulness or joy*," and "*breadth* or *universal sympathy*," everywhere we discover an emotional idea that is ennobling or uplifting, an emotion that we need not merely relegate to the obscure category of the "æsthetic."

11. Definition Applied to all Beautiful Objects. — We come now to the crucial point in our study. Granted that a noble emotion is excited by a beautiful object, is it true to say that the two ideas are coextensive, — does every object really beautiful excite a noble emotion? We make answer in the affirmative. Let us take two examples where at first sight the affirmation may seem to be questionable.

The first is the case of a painting executed with admirable perfection of form and color, yet openly and unblushingly licentious, *i.e.* expressing frank sympathy with a lascivious

[1] See following chapter for a fuller consideration of what we understand by a noble emotion.

conception. The appeal is to the base emotions. Now it may be said that this, though immoral and objectionable, is yet art and so is beautiful.[1] We answer this briefly.

We contend that such art is false art, and therefore is not art. The idea itself is not beautiful, nor is the artist's sympathy with it. If his power of expression invests it with attractiveness, this is misrepresentation, and hence false art, — as if he expressed his admiration for an act of physical uncleanness. One may, if one must, admire the wonderful technique exhibited in such productions; but this admiration of the artist's technical skill is quite apart from the appreciation of the beauty of the work itself, as will be set forth hereafter. It is no defect, but a triumph, in our definition, that it serves to exclude from the category of the beautiful such poisonous products of the brain.

But we turn to an example that requires more discrimination. "Pity," it may be urged, "will be admitted without contention to be a noble emotion. Now a beggar covered with rags excites my pity, yet would not be called a beautiful object. Hence we find a noble emotion excited by an object that is not beautiful." The answer to this is important, because it throws additional light on the definition and furnishes the key to the solution of other difficulties. The reason why the object described is not beautiful, is that the noble emotion, pity, is obscured by another accompanying emotion of horror, pain, repulsion, which, as was noted above, is not noble. The squalid details of the beggar make too much impression upon our feelings to give the noble emotion fair play.

This will be more convincing if we can imagine the

[1] The relation between art and morality will be considered more fully in the following chapter. See pp. 18 ff. Suffice it to say that this view is supported by such authority as Aristotle among the ancients, and by Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, Shairp, and many others of our own times.

offensive details softened down. To do this let us turn from the beggar of the street and enter a picture gallery. Perchance we may find on the walls this wretched Lazarus made the subject of the artist's brush, and so lifted into a theme of beauty. What is the transformation? The painter has idealized the object, and in doing so has subdued the shocking features and emphasized the appeal to sympathy; in other words, he has given the noble emotion its full exercise unmixed with what is repulsive, and by so doing has made his painting beautiful. This, as was said, has many applications. In real life our emotions are so complex that it is perhaps a rare occasion when the noble emotion is disengaged from all hindering influences. And hence precisely it is, that the province of the artist, whether he be poet or painter, is not merely to photograph nature, but to separate what is not beautiful from what is, to emphasize the latter and subdue or suppress the former.

12. Poetry Defined. — And so we may accept the foregoing definition of the beautiful as accurate for practical purposes. An object is beautiful when it images forth such a conception in the mind as is calculated to stir a noble emotion.

Consequently, in our notion of the beautiful we find three elements: (1) the object, concrete and sensible, to which we apply the term "beautiful"; (2) the idea, represented or suggested by the object to the intelligence; (3) the emotion awakened by the idea and the object; that is, by the idea embodied, as it were, visibly in the object.

If we compare music, poetry, and painting, all of which have for their aim to set forth the beautiful, we may observe that, in painting, *the object* is expressed primarily and directly. Painting puts the object on the canvas, and through it conveys, indirectly and suggestively, the idea and the emotion.

Music, on the other hand, seems to have a power to reach *the emotion* itself in a more direct way than is possessed by any other art; while poetry deals directly with *the idea* (language being primarily the vehicle for thought), and rather suggests than expresses the object and the emotion connected with the idea.

Applying this to our preliminary definition of poetry (page 2) we may now conclude that poetry is the art of imaging forth objectively such a conception of the mind as is calculated to stir a noble emotion, or more satisfactorily (and this formula we will make our final definition):—

Poetry is the imaginative representation, through the medium of language, of true grounds for the noble emotions.[1]

It will be noted that in this formula we have introduced the expression "imaginative representation." This is not an unwarranted addition, but merely an explicit statement of what has already been implied in the description of the beautiful. For poetry has no means of putting before us a beautiful object at all, except through a representation of it by means of the imagination.

The words "true grounds" are a convenient designation for the thought or conception that must lie at the bottom of all intelligent emotion.

If we now examine our definition analytically, we shall find that it exhibits three elements; the emotional, the imaginative, the intellectual. But, besides these, the representation of which we speak must be adequately executed in language; hence we find a fourth element, the element of language expression.

Each of these four elements will presently be discussed in separate chapters.

13. Other Definitions. — (1) Aristotle calls poetry μίμησις,— "imitation"; and if we ask, of what? we are told that it is an "imitation of men acting" ("Poetics," Chap. I). This re-

[1] See Ruskin, "Modern Painters," Vol. III, p. 10.

mark needs to be explained by comparison with other parts of the "Poetics."[1]

The following points are particularly to be noted: —

(*a*) That by the word μίμησις (imitation) we are not to understand mimicry, or photographic copying of nature, but creative production, imaginative representation. In using this word Aristotle desired to lay stress on the principle of *fidelity to nature* in depicting human character; he afterwards discriminates against exaggerated realism by stating that the poet is to imitate nature not as it actually exists in all its details, but nature as it should be, or as it ideally exists in the mind of the artist.

(*b*) That when he speaks of "men acting," he alludes not to external acts, such as fighting, running, but to the activities of the soul, the emotions, and traits of character that make up human life.

(*c*) That though this definition has special reference to the dramatic poet, it may easily be extended to cover the case of the lyric poet also, who, even in describing external nature, is bound to "imitate" (that is, to express faithfully) his own personal soul-activities or emotions, and not merely report the appearances of nature.

(*d*) That Aristotle does not tolerate any poetic sympathy with moral depravity. "Depravity is justly censured when there is no inner necessity for introducing it." "Things are censured either as impossible or irrational or *morally hurtful*."[2] The inner necessity referred to is some such artistic requirement as alluded to in the following chapter.[3]

It follows from the above that Aristotle's phrase, "poetry is an imitation of men acting," is only another expression for

[1] For a discussion of this matter, see Mr. Butcher's "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and the Fine Arts," Chap. II.

[2] "Poetics," Chap. XXV. [3] See p. 20.

the definition adopted that "poetry is the expression of noble emotion."

(2) So too, Plato ("Republic," Book 10) declares that poetry "imitates men who are engaged in action — and who in the midst of all these circumstances are conscious either of joy or grief." He then goes on to show that the poet's function is to portray the emotional rather than the rational phases of life and character; — and this leads us round once more to the definition we have adopted.

(3) With regard to the many other definitions, ancient and modern, which ascribe to poetry the essential feature of "giving pleasure," we must bear in mind that the reference is to the particular kind of pleasure called æsthetic; that is to the gratification awakened by a beautiful object. If, then, our analysis of the beautiful is satisfactory, if, in other words, æsthetic pleasure is the pleasure derived from the noble emotion excited by a noble idea embodied in a worthy object, we may conclude that these views of poetry, in so far, offer no prejudice to our own.[1]

14. Poetry and Metre. — We may here consider the further question whether we are to regard metre as a part of the essence itself of poetry. It is indeed a question of small moment, because it reduces itself to a mere matter of nomenclature. Authorities, too, are more or less equally divided, and the prince of authorities, Aristotle, is claimed by both sides.[2]

There can be no doubt that both by natural instinct and by convention some form of patterned language is adopted as the normal mode of poetical expression. But it is quite another thing to claim that, without it, what were otherwise poetry ceases to be poetry, that without it poetry is inconceivable. Metre seems to be too external a feature to be

[1] For sundry other definitions of poetry see p. 14.

[2] See "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and the Fine Arts," Chap. II.

made a part of the essence of poetry. Poetry differs from non-poetry in so many respects that concern the very heart and life of the thought and conception, that it seems unfitting to superadd another distinguishing feature that is merely external. If a composition possesses all the profounder characteristics that are requisite to make it poetry, it is unreasonable to refuse it the title merely because it is lacking in such a surface matter as metre.

Let us take an example. If we call it poetry to write, —

(1) Hear ye, wise men, my words; ye learned, hear

which is metrical, it would seem unreasonable to call it no poetry to write, —

(2) Hear, wise men, my words; and ye learned hearken unto me (Job xxxiv. 2),

because it is not metrical. Call the latter defective poetry, if need be; but poetry let it remain along with the first, for both are pitched in the exalted emotional key that is foreign to what is not poetry. On the other hand, let us formulate the same idea as follows: —

(3) I ask all wise and learned persons to attend to the remark I am about to make.

This is undoubtedly not poetry, not indeed because it is unmetrical, but because it is matter-of-fact and unemotional. Admitting, therefore, (1) to be poetry, and (3) to be no poetry, we claim that (2) should much more reasonably be classed with (1) than with (3). And if this is true, we cannot maintain that metre is a part of the essence of poetry.

It must indeed be admitted that certain types of poetry depend so largely upon metre that they would cease to be poetry if they lost it. But this is due to the fact that in these cases the emotional tone essential to poetry is sounded by the metre itself and is inseparable from it; so that in losing the

metre we lose the emotion with it. The poetical character is destroyed not precisely by the absence of metre, but rather by the absence of the emotional tone that in such poetry vanishes with the metre.

Let us take, for example, the following lines of Shelley: —

> Many a green isle needs must be
> In the deep wide sea of misery.
> — "Written among the Euganean Hills."

Let us change this to read.

> Many a green island must be found in the deep wide ocean of human misery.

We may admit that the poetry, or most of it, has fled in the second reading. The reason is that the buoyant pathos sung in the song of Shelley has deserted the phrase when robbed of its music. But this is very far from being the case with all poetry, such as many passages in "The Imitation of Christ," the "Gloria in excelsis," and some of the high-strung prose in Shakespeare's plays.[1]

EXERCISES

1. Apply the definition of poetry by answering the following questions with regard to the poems indicated below: —

(*a*) What is the chief emotion expressed?
(*b*) Can it be called a noble emotion?
(*c*) About what object is the emotion centred?
(*d*) What is the thought suggested by the object?
Golden Treasury, Nos. LXVIII, XCVI, CLIV, CCXX.

2. Criticize the following definitions of poetry in the light of the definition given in the foregoing chapter: (1) Are they reducible to the definition given? (2) Is any essential element omitted, or any unessential element added?

[1] See on this subject Saintsbury, "History of Criticism," Vol. III, p. 208.

(*a*) Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the aid of reason. — JOHNSON.

(*b*) Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds. — SHELLEY, "Defense of Poetry."

(*c*) Poesis est imitatio actionum humanarum cum fictione. — JUVENCIUS, "Ars Dicendi."

(*d*) Poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language. — WATTS, in Encyclopædia Britannica.

(*e*) Poetry is idealised emotion expressed in the language of emotion. — H. SPENCER, "Essay on Style."

(*f*) Poetry is the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination; the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours. — MACAULAY, "On Milton."

(*g*) Poetry is the expression in beautiful form and melodious language of the best thoughts and noblest emotions which the spectacle of life awakens in the finest souls. — SHAIRP, "The Province of Poetry."

(*h*) Poetry is thought colored by strong emotion, expressed in metre and overheard.[1] — J. S. MILL, "Thoughts on Poetry."

(*i*) Poetry is the natural impression of any object or event by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion, and producing by sympathy a certain modulation of the voice or sounds expressing it. — HAZLITT, "On Poetry."

(*k*) A poem is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth. — COLERIDGE, "Biographia Literaria," Chap. XIV.

(*l*) Poetry is the art of producing pleasure by the just expression of imaginative thought and feeling in metrical language. — COURTHOPE, "Life in Poetry, Law in Taste."

[1] In saying that a poem is not heard but "overheard," Mill indicates a trait of poetry referred to in the following chapter. The poet does not address an audience as does the orator, but rather contemplates a beautiful vision and sings of it to his own soul. The reader, as it were, overhears his raptures.

CHAPTER II

Emotion in Poetry

1. The Emotions. — By the emotions we understand all those stirrings of the soul that are derived not merely from the senses, but from the intellectual perception of an object, and variously designated by the terms, emotions, passions, sentiments, and the like. These various emotions in their simpler forms are: sorrow, resignation, sadness, despair, discontent; anger, hate, revenge, aversion; courage, fear, anxiety, confidence; love, friendship, affection, sympathy, piety, veneration, awe, esteem, joy, peace, contentment, cheerfulness, and countless others. The emotions, as we experience them, not only range through every grade of intensity, but are often highly complex, the simpler emotions, such as those indicated, combining in most unexpected ways which seem to defy analysis. Hence it is often no easy matter to define with nicety the emotion expressed in a poem; sometimes it might be best described as a certain exalted or high-keyed state of soul in regarding a subject.

These emotions, though never evoked without an intelligent motive, may be more or less spontaneous; that is, on beholding a beautiful object, we may conceive an emotion without realizing distinctly what we have apprehended in the object to create the feeling. It is the province of the poet to penetrate to this motive, and suggest it to the consciousness of the reader.

2. Poetry Emotional. — When we say that poetry is emotional, we mean, not merely that it contains incidentally

some emotional coloring, but that the expression of emotion belongs to its very essence and is its specific object. This is of first importance in the study of our subject; for it is in this respect precisely that poetry differs from prose, whose primary function is not to express emotion, but to communicate fact and thought.

Let us examine this in detail: —

(*a*) The *scientific treatise* in prose contains purely abstract, unemotional thought, such as the demonstration of a theorem or of the laws of nature, and hence of all forms is the farthest removed from poetry.

(*b*) Strictly *literary compositions*, such as the literary essay, history, biography, and the like, are indeed tinctured with emotion, and it is this that constitutes their distinctive quality as literature. Yet even in these cases the proper end of prose is kept uppermost, viz., to communicate thought or fact, — and the emotion is merely incidental and subsidiary. On the other hand, the poet's first thought is not to address the reader, but to express the enthusiasm he feels in contemplating a fact or a thought. The emotion is everywhere; it gathers up thought, images, incidents, — suffuses them with its own glow, molds them into new combinations, transforms them with an idealized existence.

(*c*) The *prose story* runs somewhat nearer to poetry in respect to emotion; but even here the same general distinction may be observed, if we attend to the spirit of the composition rather than to the letter. The story in prose differs from the poetic narrative in this, that its avowed end is *to tell the story*. It may indeed, and often does, portray an emotional situation, and the writer may select incidents, details, and coloring to emphasize the emotion. But he does not hold himself in a professedly emotional state towards his narrative. He is *giving information* about his characters or their environment; he is conscious of an audience; he is not singing in

his own heart. This at least is not his primary purpose. But this precisely is the attitude of the poet. The prose story-teller, as it were, exhibits his subject to an outsider; the poet flings himself into the situation and feels with it and for it; he contemplates rather than narrates, and pours forth his story as he feels it. And so too when we read a narrative poem, we approach it in a condition of mind quite different from our attitude towards a story in prose. Instinctively we prepare ourselves to be swept into the emotion and carried where it leads. If we read a poem mainly to learn the incidents set forth, not only are we in no critical attitude, but we are not in the proper mood for reading poetry at all, nor the mood demanded of us by the poet.

To illustrate this difference between prose and poetic narrative, we may compare the opening lines of Maupassant's "Necklace" and of Tennyson's "Captain." The former begins as follows: —

She was one of those pretty and charming girls who, as if by an error, are born into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded by any rich and distinguished man, and she let herself be married to a minor clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction.

The poem of Tennyson begins: —

Brave the Captain was; the seamen
Made a gallant crew,
Gallant sons of English freemen,
Sailors bold and true.

If we try to catch the difference in tone between these two passages, we shall recognize that the former is matter-of-fact; the latter is frankly emotional. The poet is interested not so much in declaring that the Captain was brave, as in giving utterance to his enthusiasm about that fact.

Again, there is the line from Tennyson,

Come into the garden, Maud.

If we pronounce these words merely by way of calling to the person addressed, they become simple prose; they are poetry when uttered in a remote, emotional tone with no expectation of a reply.[1]

(*d*) There are passages of impassioned prose that approach even more nearly to poetry than the preceding, and hence often go by the name of *prose-poetry*. Some of these are nothing more than poetry in disguise, lines that have been robbed of the important assistance which metre lends to the expression of emotion, though in substance poetic. Indeed, we should not be wrong in terming such passages simply poetry; if we do not do so habitually, it is because metre is the accepted vehicle for poetic expression, and we are prone to cling to external conventions in everyday speech, rather than to the internal essence of things.

3. Poetry Nobly Emotional. — It is not sufficient that poetry be emotional; the emotion must be noble. This principle, which was examined in the preceding chapter, must be considered in its practical bearing on poetry. It must be noted in the first place that the nobility of any primary emotion depends upon the object that excites it, and we cannot rightly estimate the former without considering it in its relations to the latter. There is nothing that can ennoble the sentiment of love or admiration, if directed to what is unlovely or not admirable; and hatred and scorn may be as noble as love at its best, if the object that we hate and scorn is really hateful and contemptible. Premising this we may consider the following details.

(*a*) The emotion proper to poetry must not be immoral, that is, must not imply sympathy with what is immoral. Several views of the question require our attention.

[1] See on this whole subject F. N. Scott, in Mod. Lang. Assoc. Publication, Vol. 19, p. 250, from whom this example is taken. Also Mill's "Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties." (Dissertations and Discussions, Vol. I.)

The first is an ethical consideration. Whatever theory we may hold about the essentials of art, it must certainly remain true that if art offends against morality, the former must yield to the superior claims of the latter. Any poem or other art-product that becomes a moral menace to the normal man forfeits its right to be exhibited to the world at large. The general purpose of the author, even though it be noble, cannot justify him in using scandalous means to achieve his purpose. We may, if we must, call such a poem good art, but, even so, it is bad morality. We may say that art exists for art's sake, and that æsthetic principles are not moral principles; but, after all, though art may exist for itself, it does not exist by itself and alone; other things vastly more momentous than art enter into the life of man, and, when art tends to vitiate these higher ends of life, it has no more right to exhibit itself before the world than the criminal who is a menace to society has a right to be at large.

The second consideration is æsthetic and more pertinent to our study. Not only ethical principles but the canons of art itself prohibit the embodiment of an immoral conception. We can no more divorce what is artistic from what is moral than we can divorce art and truth. It is indeed true that a poem may not enter into the province of morals at all, not directly at least (see Preface), and in this case, no doubt, they move apart, in different planes; but when art touches the conduct of life, it must be true to the essential moral laws, just as it must be true to the physical laws of nature, when dealing with the life of nature. It is false art to hold up a distorted ideal of conduct.

Thirdly: It may be objected that the conception embodied in a poem may be offensive under one aspect, and pleasing under another, — may be offensive morally, and at the same time gratifying æsthetically. But we must ask ourselves in what does this æsthetic aspect consist. If what pleases

is the poet's expression alone, we must bear in mind that this is admiration merely of the external and formal element of the poem, not of the essential and vital poetry in it. — Or, again, the poet may be said to please by putting before us what is admirable though in an immoral personage, by exhibiting, for instance, the tenderness and pathos of illegitimate love. And in this case we hold that any undue emphasis laid upon the immoral aspect of his subject detracts from the tenderness and pathos which it was his purpose to portray, and hence is an artistic sin, as obscuring, not helping the effect.[1]

Fourthly: We must, however, note that a vicious object may subserve a noble emotion in two ways: first, if it is so depicted as to create a just abhorrence in the mind;[2] — and secondly, when the repulsive object merely serves the purpose of contrast, to throw into higher relief the noble emotion that is the prevailing motive of the poem. In any case the poet must make it apparent that his sympathy lies not with the moral evil. This does not entail the necessity of bringing the evil character to an evil end, but of marking distinctly where the evil is and not disguising it under the semblance of goodness. "An artist who leaves it doubtful whether he recognizes the distinction between good and evil at all, or who detects in all his characters so much evil that the reader's sympathies must either be entirely passive or side with what is evil, is blind to artistic as well as to moral laws."[3]

The satires of Juvenal depict vice, but the purpose is to hold it up to scorn, to the "rigidi censura cachinni." The characters

[1] See Francis Thompson, "A Renegade Poet and Other Essays," p. 209.

[2] Evil regarded in its essential nature may be ugly; but, shown in the action of a comedy to be nugatory and ridiculous, it ceases to be ugly; it is an element in a fact which is beautiful. — BUTCHER, "Aristotle's Theory, etc.," p. 364.

[3] R. H. Hutton on "George Eliot."

of Goneril and Regan in King Lear are represented not so much for their own sake as to develop the higher traits in Lear and Cordelia. The same is true of Thersites in the Iliad. On the other hand, critics have often marked it as defective art in Paradise Lost that the sympathies have a tendency to lean towards the majestic figure of Satan. The poet, with his eyes fixed upon that towering personality, sometimes overlooks the shadow of reprobation under which he should be kept in order to satisfy the artistic requirements of the situation.

The artistic sin of reveling to excess in the portrayal of moral deformities, even when they are held up for reprobation, may be found in the works of the pre-Shakespearian dramatists. Outrage, crime, furious passion overshadow every scene; there is nothing left to admire but intensity. In "The Jew of Malta," "Barabbas has been treated by the Christians like a beast and he hates them like a beast." "The hero in 'Tamburlaine the Great' is seated on a chariot drawn by chained kings, burns towns, drowns women and children, puts men to the sword, and finally, seized with an invisible sickness, raves in monstrous outcries against the Gods, whose hands afflict his soul and whom he would fain dethrone."[1] This is magnificent but it is not art.

(*b*) A noble emotion must not be narrowing or depressing to the soul. Such emotions are fear, anxiety, discontent, and the like. These can find a place in poetry only on the conditions laid down under the preceding head.

For example, in "King John," Shakespeare creates a hero who is precisely the victim of such narrow passions. The King is infirm of purpose, even cowardly, in contriving the death of Arthur, and comes to his end in a state of collapse. The play as a whole leaves a narrowing and depressing effect upon the mind. The more clearly we apprehend the character of John as represented, the less satisfactory the play seems from an artistic point of view.

[1] Taine, "History of English Literature," Book II, Chap. II.

In this connection a word must be said of tragic poetry. It is indeed true that tragedy, according to Aristotle, arouses in us fear as well as pity. But we are told in "The Poetics" that tragedy purges these two emotions in the soul, purges them of the element of depression, of the narrowing element, and raises them thus into a higher and the proper poetic plane. The fear experienced by one who witnesses a tragedy is very different from the shrinking fear attending personal or real danger. In so far as we fear for the characters of the drama, the unreality of the situation, its purely imaginative character removes the pain from the fear we feel; and in so far as we fear for ourselves as we witness a tragedy, the remoteness and vagueness of the danger leaves the real fear hardly more than a graver view of human life and its vicissitudes.[1]

(*c*) We likewise exclude from poetry purely self-regarding emotions. This does not forbid the poet to record in verse his own personal feelings, for to do so is of the very nature of *lyric* poetry. But it does prohibit any emotion in which the regard of the writer is fixed exclusively on self or on the private, personal phase of the experience, rather than on the universal character of the emotion he feels, as common to all men. His reader must be able to find in the poem an interpretation of his own heart.

We might take the tragedy of Hecuba as an example of how hatred can be narrowed into a purely personal matter and so lose its dignity as a poetic motive. Hecuba gloats over the sufferings of Polymestor, her enemy; her revenge is too selfish to be noble; she loses all sight of the broader view of satisfied justice or atonement for wrong done, and feeds on merely the personal gratification of her victory.[2]

[1] See, on Aristotle's observation, p. 105. Also Butcher, "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art," p. 236.

[2] See also p. 139.

(*d*) Poetry excludes all purely sensual emotion, *i.e.* what is mere gratification of the eye, ear, or lower senses, or of the animal appetites.

As an example of how a poem may stray into this sort of degeneration, we may cite the well known lines from Keats' "Eve of St. Agnes."

> And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep
> In blanched linen, smooth and lavender'd,
> While he from forth the closet brought a heap
> Of candied apple, quince and plum and gourd,
> With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
> And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
> Manna and dates: . . .

Like much of the poetry of Keats, this is nothing more than an idealized appeal to the inferior senses, without any justification from the context of the poem. The elegance of the diction may rescue it from coarseness, but cannot change the meaning of what is written.

(*e*) The emotion must not be merely trivial. Here let us note that an emotion may have varying degrees of nobility. We should not confine our conception of what is noble, as Ruskin seems to do, to the great overpowering emotions, such as "Love, Veneration, Admiration, Joy, and their opposites, Hate, Indignation, Horror, and Grief."[1] The thousand lighter emotions that pass over our souls in the routine of daily life may all, at least to some slight extent, be noble if occupied with worthy objects. Nobility, in the aspect we are now considering, may run down in the scale of dignity or elevation till it approaches *the trivial.* This is the line of demarcation. What is trivial cannot be called noble. But a noble emotion may still be quiet, or simple, or even playful so long as it retains that serious or purposeful suggestion that saves it from frivolity. But when verse sinks below all recognizable nobility, when it becomes merely and purely

[1] "Modern Painters," Part IV, Chap. I.

trivial, then we say that it ceases to be poetry and becomes mere verse.

As an example of the latter let us note this triolet of Austin Dobson.

These are leaves of my rose,
Pink petals I treasure;
There is more than one knows
In these leaves of my rose.
Oh, the joys: oh, the woes,
They are quite beyond measure.
These are leaves of my rose,
Pink petals I treasure.

This is most undoubtedly trivial emotion. Its trivial flippancy is its only motive. Hence, while it is dainty verse, we are not accustomed to dignify it by the name of poetry. Let us put by the side of this, say, Gray's verses "On a Favourite Cat" (Golden Treasury, CLVI). This is light and playful, yet if we compare it with the above triolet, we will exempt it from the charge of triviality. Poems lying midway between these two are on the border-line between verse and poetry, and in individual cases it may be difficult to decide to which class they should be assigned.

4. The Intensity of Emotion. — We turn now to another consideration. The intensity of the emotion must be distinguished from its degree of nobility. The latter is a matter of quality; the former a matter of quantity. An emotion that rises to no great height of sublimity may yet be expressed with great fullness, there may be much of it; and we call the emotion intense. On the other hand, an emotion lofty in itself, such as pathos, may be treated lightly, there may be little of it; and we call the emotion quiet or suppressed. In general we may say that the poetry of Shelley is intense, the poetry of Gray quiet.

A high pitch of emotional intensity is not of itself a poetical merit. Rather, the principle is that the degree of

intensity should be appropriate to the subject expressed, or, in other words, that the poet should be neither intensely emotional without sufficient motive, nor feebly emotional when his theme calls for strong passion. Of this more is to be said in the chapter on "Thought in Poetry."

Beginners are often perplexed in estimating the emotional intensity of a poem; and indeed there is no external mark by which we may judge. We cannot rely always upon the amount of feeling that the poem excites in our own soul, for this depends largely upon each one's personal character. Much less can we gauge emotion by such rhetorical devices as exclamations, apostrophe, inversion, and the like; intense emotion is often expressed simply and briefly, as in the lines

> "But she is in her grave, and, oh!
> The difference to me."

What is needed is critical acumen, the insight that enables us, independently of our own temperament, to enter into and measure the emotion of another. This power can be developed only by reading appreciatively the best poetry under the direction of a competent guide.

Compare with the simple lines from Wordsworth the following from Ambrose Phillips, ridiculed by Pope,[1] in which the feeble emotion is eked out with exclamation and repetition to a degree of absurdity.

> Ah me, the while: ah me, the luckless day:
> Ah luckless lad, the rather might I say;
> Ah silly I: more silly than my sheep,
> Which on the flowery plains I once did keep.
>
> — Pastoral.

Sometimes the emotion springs from the *imaginative elements* in the poem, as in Blake, Shelley, Shakespeare; thus in Macbeth: —

> Why do I yield to that suggestion,
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs?
>
> — Act I, Sc. 3, ll. 134 ff.

[1] In "The Guardian," No. 40.

In other cases the *rhythmical effect* seems to carry the emotion, as in these languorous lines from Swinburne.

> Let your hands meet round the weight of my head;
> Lift ye my feet as the feet of the dead;
> For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.
>
> — "Atalanta in Calydon."

Or again it may be the *concept itself* more than the mode of expression that reaches the heart. The climax of intensity in Lear's speech at the end of the second act is reached in the simple words, "Oh fool, I shall go mad," and the piercing utterance of Lady Macbeth is couched in diction that is almost commonplace.

> "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him."
>
> — Act V, Sc. 1, ll. 43 ff.

The following lines are the conclusion of Crashaw's "The Flaming Heart" in honor of St. Theresa, of which poem Mr. Saintsbury writes that it "culminates in the most unerring explosion of passionate feeling to be found in English, perhaps in all poetry."

> Live here, great Heart; and love and dy and kill;
> And bleed and wound; and yeild and conquer still,
> Let this immortall life wherere it comes
> Walk in a crowd of loves and Martyrdomes.
> Let mystick Deaths wait on't; and wise soules be
> The love-slain witnesses of this life of thee.
> O sweet incendiary! shew here thy art,
> Upon this carcasse of a hard, cold hart,
> Let all thy scatter'd shafts of light, that play
> Among the leaves of thy larg Books of day,
> Combin'd against this Brest at once break in
> And take away from me my self and sin,
> This gratious Robbery shall thy bounty be;
> And my best fortunes such fair spoiles of me.
> O thou undanted daughter of desires!
> By all thy dowr of Lights and Fires;
> By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
> By all thy lives and deaths of love;

By thy larg draughts of intellectuall day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;
By all thy brim-fill'd Bowles of feirce desire,
By thy last Morning's draught of liquid fire;
By the full kingdome of that finall kisse
That seiz'd thy parting Soul, and seal'd thee his;
By all the Heav'ns thou hast in him
(Fair sister of the Seraphim!)
By all of Him we have in Thee;
Leave nothing of my Self in me.
Let me so read thy life, that I
Unto all life of mine may dy.

For another splendid expression of intense emotion see Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven"; — also Spenser's "Epithalamium," — Shakespeare's "King Lear," Act III, — Shelley's "Adonais."

5. **Variety of Emotion.** — A short poem may confine itself to the expression of a single emotion, as in Tennyson's "Mariana," or emotions closely related, as in Wordsworth's lines "Written in Early Spring" (Golden Treasury, CCCXIX). In a longer poem, too, one note must be dominant in correspondence with the central idea of the poem; but subordinated to this we look for variety both in the character and the intensity of the emotions, — a change from joy to pathos, from peace to turmoil, and from strong passion to ease and repose.

Thus Vergil, in the descent of Æneas into Hades, portrays first the *horrors* of the vestibulum, secondly the *grim surliness* of Charon, thirdly the *pathos* of the infants and of the lovers in the Fields of Mourning, then the lingering *delight* of the shades of the Trojan warriors, and so on; and if we take a larger view of the "Æneid," we observe that the first book could be characterized by simple dignity, the second by tragic suffering, the fourth by passionate pathos, the sixth by a kind of romantic mysticism. On the other hand, the austere stateliness of "Paradise Lost" may offend by being too un-

flagging, may oppress the reader after a time and thus begin to lose its power over his emotions.

EXERCISES

1. Name accurately the emotion expressed in the following poems and range them in the order of emotional intensity: —

(*a*) Golden Treasury, Nos. CII, CCCXXXV, XXVI.
(*b*) Golden Treasury, Nos. CXLIII, LXXIV, CXCVII, CC.

2. Explain the principle by which we can justify

(*a*) such an emotion as is represented by Shylock in the "Merchant of Venice;"

(*b*) the emotion portrayed in Browning's "Mesmerism."

3. Is Tennyson's "Lotos-Eaters" a satisfactory poem with reference to the nobility of emotion portrayed?

4. Point out defective lapses from the emotional quality of poetry to the matter-of-fact quality of prose in the following: —

Golden Treasury, Nos. CCLXIII, CCXCIX, CCCXX.

5. Arrange according to the nobility of the emotion the following passages from King Lear: —

(*a*) "Hear, nature, hear — " Act I, Sc. 4, ll. 297 ff.
(*b*) "O, reason not the need — " Act II, Sc. 4, ll. 267 ff.
(*c*) "Let the great Gods — " Act III, Sc. 3, ll. 49 ff.
(*d*) "There thou mightst behold the great image of authority." Act IV, Sc. 6, ll. 162 ff.
(*e*) "Come, let's away to prison — " Act V, Sc. 3, ll. 8 ff.

CHAPTER III

Imagination in Poetry

I. The Imaginative Faculty

1. Definition. — The imagination in its essential function is defined to be *the faculty of forming mental representations of sensible objects independently of the presence of the latter.* We more commonly think of the imagination as representing objects that appeal to the sense of sight, but any sensation at all may be reproduced by the imagination. Thus, seated by a winter fire, I may call up the image of the beauty of summer fields; I may hear the song of birds, catch the fragrance of the breath of spring, and thus realize in myself the exultation of soul that the new life of nature suggests. Such is the re-creative power of this faculty when fully developed.

The imagination may be considered from many points of view. Before considering its precise bearing on poetry, it may be helpful to note one or two distinctions that are philosophical rather than poetical.

2. Productive and Reproductive. — First: We may distinguish the *productive* and the *reproductive* imagination. The latter term is employed to designate the power of forming mental representations of objects which have been perceived before. The productive imagination is the power of putting together details so as to form an image such as has never been actually before the senses, as if I join the head and trunk of a man to the body of a horse and imagine a

Centaur. It is generally admitted that the mind has no power to imagine an object absolutely new in every respect; but by assembling a variety of features borrowed from diverse objects we may construct an image that is new as a whole. Thus, one born blind can form no representation of the quality of color; whereas one familiar with objects of sight can make combinations never seen before, such as the golden branch in the grove of Avernus, or the rain of fire-flakes in Dante's "Inferno."

3. Active and Passive. — Secondly: we may distinguish between what has been well called the active and the passive imagination. The latter is the power to summon up an image when it is described or suggested to us; the former is the power to evoke an image on our own initiative. The passive imagination may be found in persons endowed with very little active imagination. The former gives the faculty of reading poetry appreciatively; the latter is the gift of the poet himself.

4. Place in Poetry. — The importance of imagination in the art of poetry may be seen from the fact that it stands related to it under a twofold aspect, — first, inasmuch as poetry is essentially emotional, and secondly, inasmuch as it is an expression of the beautiful.

For it is a well recognized fact that our emotions are not stirred by what is abstract, by mere thought, mere reason. We do not come to admire virtue by learning its definition, but rather by seeing virtue in the concrete, visibly embodied in an object. And therefore, in order to achieve its essential purpose, in order to touch the emotions, poetry must present the sensible object to our minds and so bring into play the imaginative faculty. So, too, beauty is invariably associated with a concrete object, at least so long as man is an embodied spirit. It is a misnomer to speak of a beautiful theorem in geometry or a beautiful

thesis in metaphysics or of a beautiful abstraction. And consequently from this point of view also (though it is in the end reducible to the former) poetry, being the expression of the beautiful, must rely on the agency of the imagination to represent the beautiful object.

II. The Imaginative Faculty in Poetry

We have described above the fundamental process of the imagination, viz., that of representing mental images. As it manifests itself in the province of poetry, it acts in combination with other faculties of the soul. It is guided or stimulated by the emotional faculty, by the intuitive judgment, by the taste or critical faculty, and these operate together in such a variety of ways and with such a variety of results that it becomes difficult to analyze the processes at all. Without any attempt at such analysis, which is the province of psychology rather than poetics, let us merely describe the chief results of this complex action of the imagination and other faculties of the soul so far as they affect the production of poetry.

1. Imagination and Fancy. — In the first place, criticism makes a distinction between two manifestations of the imaginative faculty in poetry, — one of which is called *Imagination* proper, and the other *Fancy*. These terms are used to designate a higher and a lower use of the power. The difference between them will become more apparent as we advance, but in their general traits they may be described as follows: —

The Imagination is intense and serious; the Fancy more light and playful. The Imagination penetrates to the heart of its subject, its deeper significance; the Fancy hovers on the surface and busies itself with externals. The Imagination acts under the inspiration of emotion and absorbing

vision; the Fancy is more cool and calculating, or arbitrary, whimsical, conventional, artificial.[1]

Thus when Milton writes: —

"The *white* pink and the pansy *freaked with jet*," he is merely external and fanciful; when Wordsworth calls the daisy "Sweet silent creature," he is penetrating and imaginative. So, too, Shakespeare's description of the equipage of Queen Mab, in "Romeo and Juliet," is playful, and hence is an exercise of fancy: —

> Her waggon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
> The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers,
> The traces, of the smallest spider's web,
> The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams.
>
> — Act I, Sc. 4, ll. 59 ff.

Compare this with the weird intensity of the description in the "Ancient Mariner," which is purely imaginative, as the image of Death in the gossamer ship: —

> Her lips were red, her looks were free,
> Her locks were yellow as gold:
> Her skin was as white as leprosy,
> The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she
> Who thicks man's blood with cold.

2. The Imaging Power and the Creative Power of the Imaginative Faculty. — The imaginative faculty in poetry also exercises two acts, not indeed separate, but distinct in idea; viz., the invention of images, and the composition or association of these images into an imaginative whole. We shall consider each of these acts and observe how in both the one and the other we may find fancy and imagination proper.

(*a*) *The Imaging Power* is that exercise of the imaginative faculty by which it calls up or invents the sensible details

[1] On the whole subject of Imagination and Fancy, see Hunt, "Imagination and Fancy"; Wordsworth, Introduction to 1815 Edition of poems; Ruskin, "Modern Painters," Part III, Sect. 2; *Westminster Review*, Vol. 154, p. 217.

of a poem; for instance, the various scenes, actions, or circumstances of a narrative; the images in which the poet conceives his thoughts, reflections, and emotions; and in general all the concrete elements, large or small, that go to make up the body of every poem. This imaging power, as has been said, may appear as imagination proper or as fancy.

It is called imagination proper when the invention is exercised under the influence of strong emotion; that is, when the poet is absorbed with the underlying significance of the image, is not interested in its color, shape, or size, or, if in these, only so far as they imply something deeper. Hence it appears not as a mere image, but as endowed with emotional or spiritual significance.

The fancy images an object in a lightly emotional mood, is occupied with its superficial, conventional qualities, or examines it curiously and with clever ingenuity, but is not absorbed or inspired by its contemplation. The image seems unnatural, overstrained, insincere, or at least not serious.

The following examples will help the student to realize the different effects of the image as it proceeds from imagination and from fancy. The first are fanciful, because they manifest curious and far-fetched conceptions, rather than inspired realizations.

> Let's talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs,
> Make *dust our paper* and *with rainy eyes*
> *Write sorrow on the bosom* of the earth.
> —"Richard II," Act III, Sc. 2, ll. 145 ff.

> Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
> *Like seasoned timber*, never gives.
> —HERBERT, "Virtue."

Compare now the intensely real and serious imagery of the imagination in these examples.

> Brightness falls from the air;
> Queens have died young and fair;
> Dust hath closed Helen's eye.
> —NASH, "A Litany."

Or these lines in which Wordsworth compares the "sweet and virtuous" maid, not to "seasoned timber," but to

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye;
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

Compare also the beautiful, but merely external description of the golden bough in the Æneid, which is an exercise of fancy, with the intensely real and piercing description of the souls in Hades, yearning to cross to "the farther shore."

quale solet silvis brumali frigore viscum
fronde virere nova, quod non sua seminat arbos,
et croceo fetu teretes circumdare truncos;
talis erat species auri frondentis opaca
ilice, sic leni crepitabat bractea vento.
— VI. 205 ff.

stabant orantes primi transmittere cursum,
tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore.
— VI. 313 f.

These lines from Thomson's "Winter" are unimpressive because the writer is thinking of little more than a faithful account of external details:—

Prone from the *dripping* cave and *dumb cascade*
The *pendent* icicle.

The following, on the other hand, is possessed of some strange magical power over the feelings, a weird, almost painful impression.

Silent icicles
Quietly shining to the quiet moon.
— COLERIDGE, "Frost at Midnight."

Note the intermingling of fancy and imagination in these richly imaged lines from Aubrey de Vere's "Ode to the Daffodil."

Ere yet the blossomed sycamore
With golden surf is curdled o'er;
Ere yet the birch against the blue
Her silken tissue weaves anew,—

Thou comest while, meteor-like 'mid fens, the weed
Swims wan in light; while sleet-showers whitening glare;
Weeks ere, by river brims, new-furred the reed
Leans its green javelin level in the air.

* * * * * * *

Torch-bearer at a wedding feast
Whereof thou may'st not be partaker,
But mime at most, and merrymaker;
Phosphor of an ungrateful sun
That rises but to bid thy lamp begone:
Farewell! I saw
Writ large on woods and lawns to-day that Law
Which back remands thy race and thee
To hero-haunted shades of dark Persephone.

NOTE. — The extraordinary imagery of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" (for instance the comparison of the loose clouds in the sky to the earth's decaying leaves), which in a less intense poem would seem far-fetched and unnatural, is perfectly in harmony with the tumultuous passion of the ode, and therefore is not fanciful, but profoundly imaginative. This principle has a wide application.

It is also to be noted that the adjective "fanciful" usually has a disparaging connotation which is not always attributable to the word "fancy." Fancy, though inferior to imagination, is not always a blemish. It is so only when it proceeds from an imperfect realization of a serious subject, as in the examples from Shakespeare and Herbert quoted above. But the poet may choose to play lightly with his theme, and when to do so is not incongruous, what we call fancy cannot be considered a defect.

Fancy and imagination often are found in the same poem, as in Wordsworth's "Daisy," Milton's "L'Allegro," and many others. Yet the work of each poet is apt to be distinguished by a prevailing use of one of these rather than the

other. Thus Cowley, Donne, Crashaw, and the so-called "Metaphysical" poets generally, are extravagantly fanciful; Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the so-called "Romanticists," chiefly imaginative, Shakespeare's earlier work and his "euphuistic" compositions, as "King John," show excellent examples of fancy; his later work is characterized by imagination. So, too, Horace deals in fancy; Vergil more often than Horace in imagination. And among the Greek poets, Sophocles we should call an imaginative poet, Aristophanes fanciful, while Euripides would seem to combine the two in more nearly equal proportion.

(*b*) *The Creative Power of the Imaginative Faculty.*—In poetry the imaginative faculty not only forms images, but combines many images so as to form one composite imaginative impression.[1] As intimated above, it is not an act of the imaginative faculty alone; the imagination coöperates with the judgment and other mental powers. We attribute it to the imagination because of the important part played by this power in visualizing the subject as a whole, whereas in composing and arranging the parts or details of a prose treatise the logical faculties of the mind are uppermost.

The imagination proper is the really effective workman here. It, and not fancy, does the distinctive work of creation. The imagination proper in the act of composing puts together details from many sources, not by an act of logic but by intuitive insight. The poet, stimulated by his emotional mood, conceives his whole subject imaginatively within one comprehensive view, all its parts transfused with the dominating significance of the piece, part growing out of part naturally and organically and contributing

[1] "He who conceives a tragedy puts into a crucible a great quantity, so to say, of impressions; the expressions themselves, conceived on other occasions, are fused together with the new in a single mass, in the same way as we cast into a smelting furnace formless pieces of bronze and most precious statuettes."—B. Croce, "Æsthetic," p. 34.

its due share to the whole, and the complete effect proceeding, as indeed it can only proceed, not from deliberate calculation, but from the intensity of the writer's realization of it as one conception.

Fancy, on the other hand, does not properly create. It composes piecemeal, part by part. Its eye is fastened exclusively on the details. These details in themselves may be of a high order of imagination in its proper sense; but the fancy flits from one to another and fails to fuse them into a homogeneous unit. We have as a resultant a series of poetical passages, rather than a great poem. The reader is not left at the end with one unified, imaginative impression.

The best examples of the creative imagination are the "Iliad," the "Œdipus Tyrannus," the "Inferno," "King Lear," and in a lesser degree "Paradise Lost." The greatness of these poems does not reside in brilliant passages scattered through them, but in the whole conception adequately expressed. Sophocles was able, by virtue of his imaginative grasp, to realize and body forth with intense fidelity the image of a great and good man pursued to ruin by destiny, and thus to create a new personality for our imaginative experience. The "Idylls of the King," on the other hand, represent what we may call a fanciful creation. The characters are not adequately realized, but are a more or less incongruous combination of the medieval knight and the modern gentleman, and the value of the poems consists in the details elaborately executed and not in the powerful representation of the whole conception.

In a narrower scope compare the vivid imaginative unity of "The Ancient Mariner," with the feeble agglutination of incidents and reflection in some of Wordsworth's narrative pieces, as "Ruth."

III. The Imaginative Treatment of Poetic Subjects

The preceding section regarded the imaginative faculty in poetry under its general aspects; we shall now turn to its particular manifestations in various kinds of poetry. This

will serve to present the same operations from a different point of view.

1. The Imaginative Faculty in the Treatment of Narrative and Description. — (*a*) *Vivid Imagery.*—In studying the imaginative value of a poem containing description or narration, the first thing to consider is the vividness of the imagery. This is the lowest form in which the imagination appears. Details that are not vivid do not fall within the range of poetry at all. The poet, indeed, must be also true to nature, but fidelity to nature is not of itself poetical. Vividness must be added to truth, and vividness implies a degree of *intensity;* that is, an intense realization of the object described and an intense presentation of it which forces it upon the imagination of the reader.

Thus if I write "the lily is a large white flower" I am not poetically imaginative, though I am true to nature. When the poet writes:

> Large, white lilies of love, sceptral and tall,
> lovely for eyes to see —
> — SWINBURNE, "Choriambics."

he is imaginative, because vivid. Other examples of vividness are:

> The many-knotted waterflags
> That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.

> I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
> Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;
> Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine
> With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.
> — "Midsummer Night's Dream," Act II, Sc. 1, ll. 249 ff.

When the image has no other poetic value beyond this first quality of vividness, it is an example of what we have called fancy. Thomson's "Seasons" is defective in poetic power, because it is largely confined to imagery, without going further.

(*b*) *Emotional Effect.* — Description and narration pass into a higher imaginative sphere when the images or details em-

ployed are not only vivid, but are endowed with emotional significance, and so make appeal not only to the visualizing power of the reader but to his heart and soul and spiritual nature.

The following lines represent a much higher effort of imagination than the descriptive lines cited above. The poet has found means, in some way hard to analyze, to touch our soul and to put it into sympathetic accord with nature.

> O Proserpina,
> For the flowers now, that frighted thou let'st fall
> From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
> Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses
> That die unmarried, ere they can behold
> Bright Phœbus in his strength.
> —"Winter's Tale," Act IV, Sc. 4, ll. 116 ff.

Such idealization is far removed from the language of prose and is one of the distinctive marks of poetry. There is no fixed rule by which poets achieve this effect; often it is by the power of association in one or other form; that is, by bringing an object into touch with some elevating conception that lifts it out of the commonplace.[1]

Thus Homer idealizes by direct comparison in "Iliad," Book VI, where we read: —

"And with her went the handmaid bearing in her bosom the tender boy, the little child, Hector's loved son, *like unto a beautiful star.*" The comparison has nothing to do with externals, but suggests a wealth of emotional features, the radiance, softness, purity, simplicity, which the image of the star sheds on the child. In "The Solitary Reaper" Wordsworth surrounds the figure of the woman singing in the field with the light of other conceptions.

[1] For a fuller discussion of the process of idealization and its relation to realism, see following chapter.

The song of the reaper is unified in the imagination with the song of nature, with distant lands, with the romantic past and all this with some quiet, simple heart-sorrow.

(*c*) *Unifying Impression.* — In examining the imagery of a poem we must also consider whether the poet has succeeded in fusing the imaginative elements of his narration or description into a homogeneous whole, which he accomplishes by the creative power of imagination described above. This appreciation cannot be made readily and offhand. By careful and sympathetic study we must determine whether he has imaged the several details under the stimulus of one dominant emotion, and whether there is produced on the reader a single impression; that is, an impression not of a series of related images, but of one large, imaginative conception richly elaborated.

Most of the shorter poems in the "Golden Treasury" illustrate this phase of the imagination, such as "The Solitary Reaper," mentioned above. To perceive more distinctly what is expected we might contrast Keats's sonnet "On Looking Into Chapman's Homer" with the same poet's sonnet, "Bright Star." In the former the whole conception of surprise and delight grows in emphasis and power under the symbol of the traveler in mysterious wonderland, culminating in the picture of "Cortez" viewing the Pacific. In the latter the master description of the first eight lines is in a most unaccountable way repudiated in what succeeds, so that the impression is nullified. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" is a more noteworthy instance because the vision of the poet is wider, and nature and the soul of man are brought together under one view; but this, the greatest of Wordsworth's poems, requires diligent study to realize its full value. — Milton's "Lycidas" contains at least one passage (the lines containing the words of St. Peter) in which the poet's imagination swerved into another field, and, though logically connected with his subject, it is imaginatively incoherent. The best of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, "The Prioresses Tale," "The Knightes Tale," "The Nonnes Preestes Tale,"

contain sometimes long digressions, and yet are compacted of a single imaginative view and leave one unmistakable impression on the imagination of the reader. On the other hand, Keats's "Endymion," which professes to realize the relations between the goddess Diana and her earthly lover, fails in this, and turns out to be nothing more than a series of luxurious descriptions.

2. The Imaginative Faculty in the Treatment of External Nature. — We shall consider this treatment as exhibited in two different modes.

(*a*) *Nature Colored by the Mood of the Poet.* — In this case the poet approaches nature preoccupied by some personal state of soul, as sorrow, joy, bereavement, and invests the scene with the color of his emotions. He has recourse to natural imagery to body forth his subjective state. He is not concerned to interpret nature, but to interpret his own mood, as will be explained more fully below.

In the following lines the imagination of the poet goes to nature for an embodiment of the emotion of cheerlessness.

> How like a winter hath my absence been
> From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
> What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
> What old December's bareness everywhere!
>
> — SHAKESPEARE, "Sonnet 97."

The nature poetry of Shelley is nearly always suffused with the ethereal and intense quality of his personal character to such a degree that his descriptive lines seem unreal, beautiful indeed and surrounded with a halo of light, but unconvincing as a portrait of nature. His "Skylark" is an unearthly spirit, his "West Wind" a ghostly enchanter, and we seem to be pursuing dreams, not realities, as we read.

NOTE. — When the influence of the poet's feelings leads him to give a distinctly false view of nature, this misrepresentation is called the "pathetic fallacy." (See Ruskin, "Modern Painters," Vol. III, Chap. 12.) The term is not

necessarily used in a disparaging sense; such misrepresentation is legitimate, because natural to the human heart, if the emotion itself is genuine. But though true to the heart, it is still false to nature, and hence a "fallacy," and it is a "pathetic" fallacy, because occasioned by the influence of passion.

We may use Ruskin's example:—

> They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
> The cruel, crawling foam.
>
> KINGSLEY, "The Sands of Dee."

and Ruskin's observation, — "the foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind that attributes to it these characters is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief," or at least the observation of nature yields to the spell of emotion.

Again,

> With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climbest the skies!
> How silently, and with how wan a face.
>
> —SIDNEY, "Sonnet."

These lines do not interpret the appeal of the moon to one thinking normally, but the disappointed lover sheds his sadness over what he sees.

(*b*) *The Mood of Nature Interpreted by the Poet.* — This act of nature interpretation is, under one aspect, the reverse of the preceding. In the former, the poet, being under the influence of some personal emotion, imbues nature with his own mood. In interpreting, the poet, contemplating a beautiful scene, is kindled into emotion or emotional thought by the influence of what he sees.

To understand this process let us conceive the following. Every aspect of nature has in itself a meaning for us, a message for our hearts, an emotional significance proper to itself, and independent of any particular mood in which we may approach it. Thus, a beetling mountain-cliff is sublime,

though I be in no sublime mood when I lift my eyes to it. The broad sunlit river is strong and peaceful, though the soul of the beholder may for other reasons be in a state of fret and agitation. The mountain, the river, are of themselves calculated to suggest the ideas of sublimity or peace.

What is true and conspicuous in the cases just mentioned, is no less true of every phase of nature that comes under our view, and yet it is not given to all to see and appreciate that meaning in every case, as it is in the more palpable examples just alluded to. To create this appreciation is the office of the poet. He grasps the great idea that lies fundamentally in the scene before him; and then in his verse he pronounces this message so distinctly and truly that we, the readers, realize for ourselves, under his interpretation, the meaning of nature that before was dim and vague.

The essential act, then, of the interpretative imagination consists in apprehending and expressing the mood of nature. This may be done in various ways. First, it may be treated very simply and obviously, as when the poet merely gives expression to the beauty of the springtime or the silence of the night. Take as an example the childlike, yet genuine, ode to Spring, of Nash (Golden Treasury, No. I). The interpretation of nature is not profound, but it is nature and not the poet that is revealed to us. Many such simple interpretations of nature are to be found in Chaucer and in English Literature *passim*.

But secondly, Nature's meaning may be interpreted more intimately than this. The poet may bring home to us a highly complex and intricate impression made by some particular scene acting on a highly sensitive soul.

We may instance the well-known night-scene in "The Merchant of Venice,"

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.
— Act V, Sc. 1, ll. 54 ff.

In quite another style, but with the same imaginative power, Keats interprets the summer midnight among the woods:—

Upon a tranced summer night
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave.
— "Hyperion," Book I, ll. 72 ff.

Thirdly, with still deeper insight, the poet may give us the *moral* meaning of nature, the message that in some sense bears on the conduct of our lives. This, of course, does not mean using a landscape as an excuse for drawing a lesson upon life, as, for example, in Young's "Night Thoughts," and in many another lesser poet's lines, but rather in seeing "the spiritual truths mirrored in the face of Nature, in discovering the message for a higher life that Nature itself means to convey."[1]

The poetry of Wordsworth is pervaded with this spiritual interpretation of nature. Almost any of his nature poems will serve to illustrate it. Even the narrative poems, such as "Lucy Gray," "Ruth," or "Matthew" are intended to represent the moral effect of nature acting on the soul, rather than mere pathos or sympathy.

As another example see Matthew Arnold's poem entitled "Self-Dependence" and these concluding lines from Aubrey de Vere's

[1] For a complete study of this subject, see Shairp, "The Poetic Interpretation of Nature."

magnificent "Autumnal Ode" in which with unflagging inspiration he ascends from the glories of the seasons in their changes to the immutable glories of the Realm of Rest.

Hark! the breeze increases:
The sunset forests, catching sudden fire,
Flash, swell, and sing, a million-organed choir:
Roofing the West, rich clouds in glittering fleeces
O'erarch ethereal spaces and divine
Of heaven's clear hyaline.
No dream is this. Beyond that radiance golden
God's sons I see, His armies bright and strong,
The ensanguined Martyrs here with palms high holden,
The Virgins there, a lily-lifting throng.

* * * * * * *

Man was not made for things that leave us,
For that which goeth and returneth,
For hopes that lift us yet deceive us,
For love that wears a smile yet mourneth;
Not for fresh forests from the dead leaves springing,
The cyclic re-creation which at best
Yields us, — betrayal still to promise clinging, —
But tremulous shadows of the Realm of Rest:
For things immortal Man was made,
God's image latest from his hand,
Co-heir with Him who in Man's flesh arrayed,
Holds o'er the worlds the Heavenly-Human wand:
His portion this, — sublime
To stand where access none hath Space or Time,
Above the starry hosts, the cherub band,
To stand — to advance — and, after all, to stand!

3. The Imaginative Faculty in the Treatment of Human Character. — (*a*) *Description of Character.* — This is parallel to the interpretation of nature described above. The vivid conception of an imagined individual enables the poet to draw a portrait true to life, and by emphasizing salient traits

to interpret the character as the nature poet interprets nature. Effective character description consists not of abstract elements, nor yet of mere externals, but rather of such outward features as vividly suggest the soul within.

The following characterization is too abstract to make a real impression: —

> Then Aristides lifts his honest front;
> Spotless of heart, to whom the unflattering voice
> Of freedom gave the noblest name of Just.
>
> — THOMSON, "Winter."

Compare the descriptions of character in the "Deserted Village" such as these significant lines applied to the schoolmaster: —

> In arguing too the parson owned his skill,
> For, even though vanquished, he could argue still,
> While words of learned length and thundering sound
> Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around.

— and better still, because more concentrated, the portrait of Odysseus in the third book of the "Iliad."

"But whenever Odysseus full of wiles rose up, he stood and looked down, with eyes fixed upon the ground, and waved not his staff whether backwards or forwards, but held it stiff, like to a man of no understanding; one would deem him to be churlish and naught but a fool. But when he uttered his great voice from his chest and words like unto the snowflakes of winter, then could no mortal man contend with Odysseus; then marveled we not thus to behold Odysseus' aspect."

The best examples in English are to be found in the Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales."

(*b*) *The Dramatic Representation of Character.* — This is the process of creating a character, not by describing its traits, but by exhibiting it as it reveals itself in speech and action, as in the drama. It is the highest of all the powers of the imagination, and belongs in its perfection to the greatest of the world's poets, as Shakespeare, Homer, Sophocles.

Wonderful as is this magical power to set before us a vivid character in a few words of dialogue, yet it is reducible to an act of the imagination in union with other mental powers. We may analyze it as follows: —

The poet, gifted himself with a many-sided personality, experiences within his own soul, in the storm and stress of his life, a wide range of emotional moods. Besides this, being endowed with powers of keen observation and insight, he notes vividly and intelligently the varying personalities in actual life with whom he comes in contact. Both of these experiences, those within his own soul and those observed in others, are stored up in his memory and imagination in such vivid impressions that he is able to summon them up at will, to combine them in a variety of ways, to enlarge or diminish this characteristic or that, — and to do all this, not by a process of deliberate and conscious piecing together, but at a glance and intuitively. Thus from his storehouse he projects before his own mind a new character, entirely harmonious in itself and entirely true to nature.

He beholds this creation of his mind so vividly that he is able not merely to describe it, but to register its thoughts, its words, its turns of expression.

But this is not all. Besides this power of vividly realizing, the dramatic poet has such sureness of touch and such command of expression, that he can suggest to the reader the character he conceives in a few master strokes. The thought that is uttered, the words and expressions, the very style itself of the language, is a revelation of character. In actual life we may have a very indistinct impression of a person after an hour's conversation; the dramatic poet often gives us a distinct impression after half-a-dozen lines. And these persons are so real, so complex, such true representations of life, that we may discuss the traits of an individual like

Hamlet or Macbeth with as much interest and with as little possibility of reaching a categorical decision, as we discuss the character of living beings. Possibly Shakespeare himself could not tell us decisively whether Hamlet were mad; for Shakespeare did not manufacture Hamlet; he realized what he would do and feel and say under given circumstances, and Shakespeare, beholding him, might well ask himself whether this man were really sane. By such intuition we are given the characters of Lear, Falstaff, Hotspur, and all the other great creations of the dramatists. It is found also in the epic poets, as Homer, and even in the dramatic monologues of Browning and others.[1]

We have seen above that the poet may interpret nature either in its general and superficial moods, or in some more intricate and specialized phase of her appeal to man. The same happens in the case of the dramatic poet. He may represent a general character, such as the conventional Farmer or Trader or Parson, and confine his delineation to the typical traits. This is the lowest form of dramatic imagination. Or again he may represent not a type, but a highly individualized being, one that possesses all the delicate lights and shadows and intricacies of character that we observe in individual men and women.

As an instance of the first we may refer to the Morality Play "Every Man." "Every Man" is the typical human being. The writer attempts merely to represent dramatically what he conceives to be the experience of the human race in general, when, in the full possession of his power, a man is brought face to face with approaching death. Again in the Interlude called "The Foure P's" we have the typical "Palmer," "Potecary," "Pardoner," and "Pedlar," not individuals but types of men; it is not Farmer *John*, but *the Farmer* in general, that is represented.

For illustration of the gift of the Dramatic Imagination in its

[1] On the dramatic imagination, cf. C.F. Johnson, "Elements of Literary Criticism," Chap. III.

fulness, the reader must have recourse to longer examples than can be quoted here. The best of Shakespeare's plays furnish the type. It will help to make the appreciation more distinct in the mind if one of Shakespeare's tragedies, for instance, "Richard III," be compared with Bulwer Lytton's "Richelieu." In the latter drama the character portrayal is executed with an unskilful hand. For instance, the Cardinal moralizes, but not always at the right moment. He has periods of weakness (as in the soliloquy, Act III), but it is not exactly the weakness of a strong man. He is familiar, (as with Joseph), but not always in that precise tone which a great man uses, and more than once we suspect him of ranting. These are defects which obscure the impression of the character, and which it would be impossible for the poet to commit, if his vision were not dim or unsteady.

A more obvious illustration will be found by comparing the scene between Arthur and Hubert in Shakespeare's "King John" with the same scene in "The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England." The scene from the older drama is given in full at the end of this volume. The Arthur of the "Troublesome Raigne" is presumably a more mature lad than Shakespeare's Arthur, but, old or young, he is without significance. In all the long scene, there is not only lack of pathos, not only great diffuseness, but there is nothing natural. The elaborate argumentation on the justifiability of Hubert's proposed action is out of place. The boy-prince speaks in precisely the same tone as the gaoler. Both are manikins that leave no impression of character whatever. Shakespeare in half as many lines accomplishes everything. He has not only pathos, but the two characters are drawn with such precision, clearness, and firmness of touch that hardly a word is ineffectual. Even the euphuism of Arthur is such as a boy might use, once granting the instinct and habit of it, an instinct and habit which Shakespeare was deliberately, and for stage purposes, transplanting from the court of Elizabeth to the court of King John.

Such are the various forms of imagination as manifested in poetry. In regard to all of them it must be borne in mind, as we have tried to show, that the imagination is essentially

a faculty of seeing, not of reasoning. It does not reach its results by conscious processes of analysis or synthesis, but by intuition, by realizing. The poet does not *think out* a resemblance between the skylark and a "firefly in a dell of dew," but he sees it. He does not piece together a scene of nature; he beholds it as it passes before his mind's eye. Hence the poet is called a seer, one who sees; and he is said to have visions, to be inspired, to be possessed of "a fine frenzy."

NOTE. — The *images* in a poem are contained in all nouns, adjectives, verbs, and so forth, that convey a sensible detail to the mind, as "*Bare, ruin'd, choirs,* where late the sweet *birds* sang." The *imaginative elements* are made up of groups of images that are closely related. Thus the sonnet from which the preceding line is quoted, Golden Treasury, XXXVIII, may be said to contain three imaginative elements corresponding to each of the three quatrains.

Far more important than the images actually represented by the words of the poem are the images not expressed but suggested. The poet can never be content with what he literally expresses, but selects some vital image for expression which arouses a host of secondary images in the mind, and these often give their chief value to the poem. In the "Ode to the Nightingale" we are told that this same song ofttimes hath

> Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn —

lines which open up a vista into the dim land of romance and chivalry, haunted castles, high adventures, dolorous deeds, and all the dreams of medieval knighthood. Therefore the imagination of the reader of poetry must be quick to respond to the poet's suggestion and can never be passive, inert, or merely analytic.

EXERCISES

1. Compare the similes in Shelley's "Skylark" and in Lodge's "Rosaline" (Golden Treasury, XIX); explain the difference between them and show which represents the higher exercise of the imaginative faculty (fancy or imagination).

2. Find an example of the "pathetic fallacy" in Milton's "Lycidas," and explain.

3. Discriminate between fancy and imagination in Milton's "L'Allegro."

4. Should we call the imaginative details in "Lycidas" predominantly fanciful, or imaginative in the proper sense?

5. What are the large imaginative elements in Wordsworth's "Cuckoo"? Show how they are fused into one whole conception or impression.

6. In the descriptive parts of Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur," select two or three places where the imagery is mere setting, but without distinct emotional significance; other places where the imagery contributes to the emotional character of the poem.

7. What single distinct impression is conveyed by Collins's "Ode to Evening"? Show how the various imaginative elements are united to produce the impression.

8. Does the poet interpret nature or express his own mood in the following?

Keats's "Ode to Autumn."
Gray's "Elegy."
Campbell's "Evening Star."
Shelley's "To the Moon."

CHAPTER IV

Thought in Poetry

1. Thought and Truth. — By the thought-element in poetry we understand the reflections, the views, the principles, the ideals that the writer expresses — also the incidents, facts, objects, described, when we regard these not as images of the imagination, but as inventions or records of the mind, subject to the laws of truth, probability, and the like. This element is of fundamental importance in the consideration of every work of art; for thought of some kind serves as the basis of all intelligent emotion, of all emotion that is not mere instinct or sensation. It is not enough either for the poet or for the reader of poetry to feel joy he knows not why, or to be filled with admiration for he knows not what. We rejoice intelligently when we have an intelligible motive for our joy.

This does not mean that I must be able to analyze what I feel, or explain it by an act of reflex consciousness, but it does mean that what I feel must be more than a meaningless and motiveless exhilaration or depression of spirits. The imagination, it is true, plays an important part in stimulating feeling, but deeper down than the imagination lies the act of intelligence. The cry of "Fire" starts a panic, but it is not merely the image of the horrors suggested by the word, but the thought that fire is present and a menace to me now. Consequently to read poetry is an act not only of the emotions, not only of the imagination, but fundamentally, just as in reading prose, an act of the understanding.

Therefore it is of supreme importance to understand the poet's view of life, what ideals he unfolds, what standard he raises, in a word, what idea he wishes to convey; for such things are the foundation on which the whole edifice of true poetry depends, and by them we understand whether his emotion is just, right and worthy, or the contrary.

Our first principle, therefore, is that the emotion proper to poetry is not mere sensation, but rational emotion founded on a rational motive.

We must now inquire how this thought element manifests itself in various classes of poems. In the first place we often find incidental reflections of various kinds scattered through longer poems, which give in passing some notion of the poet's view of life. We can scarcely read a play of Shakespeare without lighting upon many such observations as

> To thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.
>
> — "Hamlet," Act I, Sc. 3, ll. 78 ff.

or

> The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
> But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
>
> — "Julius Cæsar," Act I, Sc. 2, ll. 140 f.

But such utterances, for the reason that they are casual and incidental, do not affect the poem as a whole, and do not show its general motive thought, of which we are now speaking.

This central thought underlying the whole is itself sometimes openly expressed, often at the beginning or at the end, and sometimes in emphatic places in the course of the poem. A very plain example is Tennyson's "Captain," where the narrative is preluded by an open statement of the reflection which the story embodies.

He who only rules by terror
Doth a grievous wrong;
Deep as Hell I count his error;
Let him hear my song.

Then the incident is narrated, not precisely by way of example or illustration of this principle, as in a didactic treatise, but as a concrete expression of it. This same explicit mention of the motive thought may be found in "The Ode on Immortality," in the "Lines Written in Early Spring," and in very many poems both lyric and narrative.

It repeatedly happens, however, that the poet tells his story or describes his incident, guided constantly by some dominant idea, but not confiding it to the reader in express terms. He is content to suggest it. He feels, as he has a right to do, that if he has adequately presented his subject from his own point of view, its significance for the mind of the reader will be apparent. A hasty reading, therefore, of a poem will not always put us in possession of the writer's underlying conception, but a sympathetic apprehension of all he says should do it; and when it does, it is generally more effective that we should realize the principle in the concrete than have it thrust upon us formally by the poet's deliberate statement of it.

For instance, the tragedy of Macbeth is an exposition of a very definite theme "the consequence of grasping at power by the aid of crime." It must, of course, never be fancied that Shakespeare first said to himself "ambition is an evil," and then cast about for a story to illustrate his moral, after the manner of the catechist. Rather, contemplating the evil powers that surge in man's breast, he becomes fascinated by the story of Macbeth's ruin and is impelled "to show how the man into whose veins evil has injected some drop of its poison, becomes foredoomed to self-destruction

or annihilation." And with his eye upon this controlling idea in every stage of his drama he tends to set it forth.

As another instance, in shorter compass, we may refer to Wordsworth's well-known poem "We are Seven." If we study this poem from Wordsworth's point of view, we find that it contains not merely a pathetic incident, but a message of deeper import, familiar to readers of the poet, — that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

NOTE. — *Impressionist Poems.* — This is the name given to a class of poems which made their appearance in English literature with the romantic revival and whose vogue has increased to the present day. Their whole purpose is nothing more than to record an emotional impression, and for this they rely, not upon any intellectual motive, but chiefly upon imagination and the music effects of verse and diction. The best-known example is Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." Others are the fragment, "Kubla Khan," Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci," Tennyson's "Fatima." Although it is almost impossible for poetry entirely to sever itself from thought, in all of these poems the thought is shadowy and ineffective, and the emotion is founded on no solid intelligent basis. For this reason such poetry, however alluring, is not vital. It has no counterpart in the great poetry that has survived the ages. Its decadent quality is best illustrated in the principles of the modern school of "Impressionists" or "Symbolists" who openly avow that thought is the bane of poetry and that to excite the thrill of sensation is its supreme object. And in the latest French representatives of the school "we arrive at something approaching a sheer intellectual vacuum, the mere buzzing of the romantic chimera in the void. Such is the result of divorcing

literature from rational purpose and reducing it to the quest of sensation." [1]

2. Thought Emotional. — Not every thought or truth is suitable for poetry. Many ideas do not touch the emotional regions of the soul at all, perhaps of their very nature could not do so. Instances will occur to every one, such as mathematical truths, or those of a purely practical and commonplace character, or such as merely stimulate or satisfy curiosity, which, as has been pointed out, is not a sufficient motive for poetry. Further, not only must the thought of the poem be of itself emotional, but it must be conceived in an emotional attitude, not coldly or abstractly, but fervidly, passionately. However noble the idea may be, we can never tolerate in poetry noble abstractions, cold moralizings. Every thought must be a burning thought; every thought must issue from heart and head at once. One may think so closely that the springs of feeling stop; or one may feel so passionately, that thought is dimmed and extinguished; and either condition is fatal to poetry. The thought must be an inspiration, a vision, not a syllogism, not a definition, not a precept.

3. Proportion between Emotion and Thought. — Thought must not only be instinct with emotion, but, as it is the rational motive of the emotion, it must be proportionate to it as the cause to the effect. Now this proportion between the thought and the feeling may fall short in two ways; first, if the thought is inadequate to justify the particular emotion, and, secondly, if the emotion is too feeble to do justice to the thought. Let us examine each of these failings.

(*a*) In the first place, then, the thought must be momentous enough to sustain the quality and degree of emotion that

[1] "The New Laokoon" by Irving Babbitt, p. 146. For an excellent discussion of the whole subject, see the same work.

the poem carries. Ruskin has well pointed out that, though admiration is in itself a noble, and therefore a poetical, emotion, admiration at a display of fireworks is not poetical because such an exhibition does not really justify admiration. A great emotion must be founded on a great motive, that is, on a great conception. If not, if the poem has abundance of feeling but scanty motive, it lapses into one of two defects, either *sentimentalism* or *extravagance.*

This is perhaps the chief reason why Tennyson's "May Queen" is objectionable. There is surely no lack of feeling expressed, but it is weak feeling. There is nothing to support it. Such sentimentalism we may expect from a sickly child, but it is not poetical.

Shelley illustrates, though in another fashion, the same failure to build emotion on thought. Passion sometimes overbalances mind. There is not that adjustment between the two which we find, say, in Shakespeare or Milton. We are swept away by the intensity of the emotion and the gorgeous sweep of imagery in the "West Wind," but we come to feel that "there is some hidden want," something needed more clear, more explicit, before the poem ends, to assure us that there was a tempest in the soul to match the tempest without. Compare this poem with the tempest scene in "Lear"; and, though the comparison may not be quite fair to the lyric poet, it will serve to emphasize what we miss in the "Ode to the West Wind."

(*b*). On the other hand, the disproportion between thought and feeling may lie in the opposite direction, — the emotion may not do justice to the idea. An inspiring concept may be treated half-heartedly; the poet is not in full sympathy with his subject. The result in this case is not sentimentalism, but *insincerity.* In prose we expect the writer to believe what he says, in poetry we expect the writer also to feel what he says; and if he leaves the contrary impression, we find his appeal unconvincing.

Poetic insincerity, then, occurs when the writer does not

give full expression to the emotion postulated by his theme. This defective expression of emotion shows itself in various ways: sometimes in the verse melody, as in Wordsworth's "Poor Susan," where the subject calls for simple pathos and the metre suggests a sort of reckless gayety; sometimes it results from the fact that the writer is too intent upon word-painting to give his emotion full play, as in Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott"; sometimes his imagination is simply inert and leaves him with cold abstractions instead of glowing realities, as, for instance, in Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination."

In illustration of this quality of sincerity or seriousness, the reader should turn to the examples and commentary of Matthew Arnold in his "Essay on Poetry." Further instances may be found in a later chapter of the present book. (See Lyric Poetry.)

4. Originality of Thought. — We come now to the question whether the poet's thought must be *new*. — Certainly not new in the sense of curious or fantastic. Such thinking implies ingenuity and originality, not genuine feeling. Novel speculations cannot properly engage the emotions of the writer because his mind is presumably absorbed in elaborating and explaining them. Nor yet can they reach the emotions of the reader, who, preoccupied with the novelty of what he reads, is amused or interested rather than stirred. It is indeed fundamentally important to bear in mind that it is not enough for the poet to interest his audience however high be the plane on which that interest may exert itself. This is the function of didacticism, and didacticism stands at diameters to poetry. The test of poetry is not whether the subject interests me, but whether it is beautiful and ennobling.

Hence Horace's advice not to treat of matters "nova indictaque." Hence the practice of the great dramatists the world over to choose

subjects familiar to the audience, who were not to be distracted from the emotional effect by curiosity as to the issue of the story.[1] Hence, too, the failure, as pure poetry, of some of Browning's work, such as "Sordello"; for great as the intellectual interest of such compositions undoubtedly is, yet it remains true that it is interest that they awaken and nothing more. We find them absorbing and penetrating studies of character and attitudes, but precisely because they are studies, they do not properly belong to the category of pure poetry.

On the other hand, the poet's conception must be new in the sense that it must be newly realized. It must be not merely a borrowed idea expressed anew, with whatever delightfulness of phrase, but an idea at least *felt* anew and interpreted anew, and so re-uttered with the stamp of the poet's own personality upon it. The idea must be an inspiration to him, and if he fails of finding inspiration, it means that he lapses into "fine phrasing" (as, for instance, in Pope's "Art of Criticism"), and is chargeable with that insincerity arising from imperfect feeling which was discussed under the preceding heading.

5. Truth of Thought. — Our next question is akin to the last. We now ask whether the thought of the poet must be *true*. To answer this we must mark more clearly the distinction intimated in the opening lines of this chapter, between the two classes of conceptions that enter into poetry; that is, between *general* conceptions, such as theories of life, principles, views, reflections, and the like; and *particular* conceptions, such as incidents, facts, objects, and, in general, the subject matter of narration and description. With this distinction we return to our question of truth in poetry.

(*a*) As applied to *general conceptions*, it should be obvious that a poet's *views and principles* must be governed by objec-

[1] See Courthope, "Life in Poetry and Law in Taste," pp. 48 f.

tive truth, and cannot under toleration be false, misleading, erroneous. What the objective standard of truth may be, what views or judgments are true, what false, is quite another question. The canon of poetic criticism is that they shall not be professedly false.[1] Unless his reflections be presumably true, the poet cannot exult in them; if they are obviously false, the reader cannot be moved to emotion by virtue of them. An appeal to my emotions must be an intelligent appeal; and the intelligence casts out what is recognized as untrue. Hence truth cannot be a matter of indifference. One may, it is true, be stirred by a fictitious fact, as we shall see, but this is because of the true principle or idea which is seen to underlie the fact and to be embodied by it. But if the principle itself is false, what is its worth at all? We cannot admire a deception. We are not inspired by an absurdity. I cannot rejoice with the poet who sings to me that pain and poverty are subjective phantoms of the brain; I do not believe it. I may indeed be *interested* in an idea that I know to be false; but, as we have tried to insist, to create mere interest is not the business of poetry. Of course, both poet and reader may be emotionally excited by what they regard as true but is objectively false; but this is due to the chance defect of their mental vision in this particular. The composition in this case *chances* to be poetical subjectively for those who apprehend the false idea as true. But the principle we are maintaining remains unaltered, that we cannot professedly disregard objective truth in writing poetry, or overlook the poet's truth of

[1] The contrary view is of course very prevalent in modern criticism. See for instance Swinburne on "Byron and Wordsworth"; also A. C. Bradley, "Oxford Lectures on Poetry," pp. 4 and 5; J. E. Spingarn, University of Columbia, "Lectures on Literature"; B. Croce, "Æsthetic," p. 42, and others; all of whom seem to intimate that it is a matter of indifference whether a poet's views be true or false provided they be artistically expressed.

conception in criticizing it, and that we do not reserve one department of our mind for art and another for our reason, any more than we partition off into incommunicable chambers the faculties of judging art and morality.

To illustrate this principle more fully we may have recourse to the "Iliad." In this greatest of poems we find, it is true, "a scheme of theology which more than two thousand years ago was repudiated by the philosophers; a view of nature which is to-day incredible to the schoolboy; a representation of warfare which must seem ridiculous to the soldier."[1] But it is not these things that we admire in the "Iliad"; they precisely "militate against the production of the desired effect," and if the interest of the poem centred in them, it would be prized only by the antiquarian and perhaps by the stylist. As a matter of fact, these untenable conceptions of God and Nature are mere accidentals, and so in a general appreciation of the poem are negligible factors, — negligible, that is, not because truth and error are negligible considerations, but because, in this particular poem, the element of error is insignificant in quantity and in prominence, as compared with the great and universal truth which it contains. "Nowhere else, except in Shakespeare, will you meet with so many characters which are immediately perceived to be living imitations of mankind; so many sentiments which at once move the affections; so many situations of elemental interest and pathos."[2] This is truth, and it is this in Homer's poetry that makes its greatness, not that which is false.

(*b*) We have seen that the *principles* of the poet must conform to truth; we are now to inquire into the truth demanded of the poet's *incidents, narratives, descriptions.* In discussing this subject we are to distinguish two aspects of truth, the truth of history and the truth of fiction. *The truth of history* is the conformity of the writer's conceptions with what has actually occurred, *i.e.* the conformity of his narrative with some definite chain of events that has come

[1] Courthope, "Life in Poetry," p. 50. [2] Courthope, *l. c.*

to pass, or the conformity of his description to some actual scene in nature that he may be attempting to record. *The truth of fiction* is the conformity of the writer's conceptions not to any single event or scene of his actual experience, but to the general laws of nature. This will appear more clearly from what follows.

6. Truth of History. — The truth required in poetry is normally not the truth of history. In saying this we are merely pointing out a phenomenon that is common to all writers of fiction, and is perfectly obvious, — that their office is not to record what has actually happened or to describe an object which has actual existence, but to draw their incidents and objects from the resources of the imagination.

We say this is normally the case. For the poet may, of course, elect to draw his theme from the realm not of imagination, but of fact, in which case he must be guided, at least in essentials, by the truth of fact. Shakespeare, for instance, is not at liberty to portray Richard III, as a benign king, nor to alter the essential facts of his career; nor would the poet who professed to describe "Albion's England" be free to ignore the characteristic features of the country and rely entirely on his imagination. But these restrictions are laid upon the poet by the nature of the theme he chooses, not by the essential requirements of his art.

7. Truth of Fiction. — As the poet's object is to convey an emotion, his normal business is to invent such scenes and actions as shall effect this purpose. To do this there is a form of truth by which he must be guided. This we call the truth of fiction, and it means simply that he must not invent improbabilities. For the imagination is stirred by the semblance of reality, and the semblance is destroyed by what is improbable. This probability consists of three elements. The details of the poem must be consistent; they must be accountable; they must be natural.

First — Consistency. — The several parts of a scene or character or action must be consistent, not contradictory. The second part must not be incompatible with the first. Even though such contradictions may occur from time to time in nature itself, still it is not the exceptional, not the freak of nature, that is the poet's rule of guidance in his invention, but what happens normally and intelligibly.

Thus, in the "Hecuba" of Euripides, Schlegel finds a want of consistency, and consequently a want of truth, in the fact that the queen "aged, feeble, and swooning away in sorrow should afterwards display so much presence of mind in the exercise of her revenge and such readiness of tongue in her scornful accusation of Polymestor."[1]

Secondly — Reasonableness. — The incidents of a narrative or the details of a description must be reasonable or accountable, — such as are likely to occur in the given circumstances, such as are explained by the situation that the poet has created. When Macbeth kills Banquo, we must understand the motive of the action, else we do not admit it into our minds as probable; we are not convinced. Here, too, it may be remarked, as in the preceding, many things unaccountable actually happen in the experience of life, still not that which can happen, but rather that which happens according to law, is the theme of the poet.

King John, in Shakespeare's play, is poisoned by the monks without any apparent reason or motive. Nothing in the play prepares us for this denouement; consequently when it transpires, it strikes the reader as an artificial device to bring the action to a close; it is wanting in the truth of reasonableness. Strange to say, this very defect is avoided in "The Glorious Raigne," where the poisoning is accounted for by preceding incidents.

[1] Schlegel, "Lectures on Dramatic Literature."

Thirdly — Naturalness. — The poet is to conform himself to what he observes in nature acting normally. He must, as we say, be true to life. Whether it be the nature of man or physical nature, in either case normal modes of action, normal habits of thought, the normal exhibition of passion, must be the guides, understanding by normal, not what is commonplace, but the opposite of what is impossible, accidental, or extravagant. Thus a hero is not a commonplace type, but we do not consider heroism unnatural or abnormal. But on the other hand, a child must not speak in the accents of a man, nor Agamemnon like an underling. We are not to gild the violet nor to introduce Athenian goddesses into the drawing-room.

Fr. Mambrun, S. J., in his treatise on the Epic narrates a story which illustrates what we mean by the abuse of this truth of naturalness. "I remember," he says, "reading in a book called 'Francus Sagittarius' how Zerbinus fell in love with the maiden Florizel and, having lost hope of winning her, threw himself into the sea. . . . It happened that fishermen caught Zerbinus in their net and, *thinking him a fish*, laid him out on the shore. At that very moment Queen Florizel happened to be walking on the beach. Wonderful to relate, Zerbinus gradually comes to, *not knowing whether he is alive or whether he is still in the waves*, and speaks many lovely things about Florizel in her very presence."[1] For another example to illustrate this same defect, see Taine's remark on Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard,"[2] where after calling attention to the ornate artificiality of the language which Pope puts into the mouth of the passionate lover, he remarks, with some asperity, "except truth nothing is wanting."

8. Truth of Fiction in Romantic Poetry. — The preceding principles of poetic truth are implied in Aristotle's doctrine that poetry is an imitation of nature. They are, therefore, the cardinal dogmas of the classic school of poetry. It

[1] Quoted from "The New Laokoon," by Irving Babbitt.
[2] "History of English Literature," Book III, Chap. VII.

should also be observed that they are not mere conventions, but founded on the very nature of poetry. For the object of poetic invention is to impress the imagination, to produce an illusion of reality; and this illusion is destroyed by what is unnatural or improbable. "Quidquid ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi."

And yet in apparent opposition to these principles, the romantic element in poetry, from the Odyssey downwards, does admit characters and events that are strange, mysterious, incredible in actual life, such as the witches in "Macbeth," Titania and her crew in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the preternatural action in the "Tempest." Now even Romance must preserve the illusion of nature; even a fairy tale must have probability, must be consistent, must be natural. But what is peculiar to this type of composition is that the writer of romance composition approaches the principles of poetic truth in a slightly modified way. The following rules explain this: —

(*a*) The poet is at liberty to postulate at the outset a situation that transcends nature. He, as it were, invites the reader to enter with him into a new and strange world. But having assumed this world, he invests it with the character and the features and the actions that are appropriate to it, and so makes what is actually impossible plausible and natural, once the situation is granted.

(*b*) Again, the poet sometimes justifies his preternatural conceptions on the ground that they are part of the accepted belief of the readers or belong to the traditional setting of his theme; as in the "Morte d'Arthur," "Paradise Lost," the witch-scenes in "Macbeth," and the like. In this case the imagination of the reader is prepared by custom to accept what is marvelous.

(*c*) And lastly, Aristotle himself makes a very wide concession, when he intimates that the poet may so carry us

onward in the vehemence of feeling that in our excited state of soul we are willing to believe as true what our cold reason would reject as inconceivable. It is on this ground that Aristotle defends the episode in the Iliad which describes Achilles dragging the body of Hector round the walls of Troy amid the speechless wonder of the Achæan host.

9. Idealization. — (1) Bearing in mind what has been said of truth, we are in a position to understand what we may regard as the characteristic of poetic work, viz., the process of idealization. Though it is the function of the poet to imitate, that is, to be true to nature, this imitation will never be a literal transcript of nature in all its details. Truth in narration or description is indispensable, in order that the poet may present convincingly his subject to the reader. But he must do more than this. Through his subject he must also convey a particular impression or emotion, and he uses description and narration only with a view to giving to the emotion concrete embodiment. When we look at a scene poetically, we not only see it, we feel it. And it is the office of the poet to record this feeling or impression.

Now in every object as it exists in actual life, there are features that help this impression, and other distracting elements that are commonplace, ineffective, and consequently unsuitable. These indifferent features it is the business of the artist to suppress or soften down, and to select those that are suggestive. In other words, he is not to make a mere list or inventory of what he finds in the scene, or what he can conjure up in his imagination, but to use discrimination in selecting them, this discrimination to be determined by the idea he wishes to express in painting the scene. This is the first process of idealization.

Thus Gray in the "Elegy" idealizes the scene by selecting what suggests the solitude and pensiveness of nightfall. He might have

conceived many other details associated with the scene, such as the chill of evening, the smoke curling from the cottage, the whistling shepherd lad, and what not. But these are not to his purpose. He discards them, and with the poet's intuition, records such as are effective.

In the same way the dramatic poet idealizes character by bringing into relief the traits, simple and complex, that make up the personality as conceived by the poet, and by suppressing the thousand irrelevancies and trivialities which enter into actual conversation, but which leave no distinct impression of character.

So too, plot in the drama is action idealized; that is, action whose parts are so invented and so woven together as to represent concretely a single conception or theory of life.

From this we see why a photograph cannot be considered a work of art. The only approach to idealization in photography lies in the photographer's selection of his subject, but, given the subject, the camera reproduces merely a mechanical inventory of the details. On the other hand, when the mind contemplates any scene or object, especially in an emotional attitude, the attention fixes itself on some one aspect of it in particular; other features are noted indistinctly and may indeed be so completely overlooked that we remain absolutely unaware of their presence. Thus the mind is ever unconsciously engaged in a sort of process of idealization. This the artist does with his brush, and the poet through the power of language, and thus both give a truer reproduction of the mental perception than the photograph, which registers every detail with mechanical impartiality.

(2) The first stage, then, of idealization is a process of selection. The second and perhaps the more important part is a process of heightening; that is, of accentuating the effectiveness of the selected details. Rarely, as was said in a former chapter, is the poet contented with mere externals, however judiciously chosen. He breathes a new life into what he sees. He takes the object into his imagination and brings it out divested of what is mean, trivial, or commonplace, and glowing with a new light and possessing

a new power to express the poet's idea. So to transform the subject and the details of his poem is the second part of idealization; it is thus referred to by Wordsworth in the "Prelude":

> An auxiliar light
> Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
> Bestowed new splendour:
> . . . and the midnight storm
> Grew darker in the presence of my eyes.

This subject was alluded to when treating of the emotional effects produced by the imagination[1] and examples may be found in the same place. As was there remarked, the poet idealizes in this way chiefly by the power of association; that is, by shedding upon his subject a light from other beautiful or intense objects. This he does by metaphor and simile, or by contrast, or by thinking of his subjects in various relations to other beautiful objects, as in the examples quoted; also by the suggestive power of his diction; and indeed in a certain sense by the very music of the verse. In other words, the poet makes use of every single instrument of his art to aid him in intensifying to the proper tone the aspect of the scene or action or person that occurs in his poem.[2]

We may glance at a very brief example in Shelley's "Dirge" (Golden Treasury, CCCXXXIV), but almost every line of every poem is an illustration, in one way or another, of idealization. In this example, as in every other, it is impossible to analyze the whole secret by which the poet brings his subject into emotional relief, but we may note in these lines the attributes of human sorrow associated with the wind, "moanest loud," "tears," "wailing"; the suggestion of the coffin and the tomb in "Knells," the peculiar intensity of the effect in "Bare woods," the gloom that clings round

[1] See p. 39.

[2] On Idealization, see Woodberry, "The Heart of Man." Also Encyclopædia Britannica, *s.v.* "Fine Arts."

"Deep caves," and, most noticeable of all, perhaps, the desolate impression created by the slow, pausing metre.

10. Realism. — Against such idealization the professed realist takes his stand. He does so on two grounds. First: Nature, he argues, is the all-sufficient theme of the artist, however low the type of nature which he represents. The pleasure derived from the literally faithful portrayal of life is the essence of æsthetic enjoyment, and to heighten, to transform, to ennoble a subject is not to help but to injure the artistic effect.[1]

Now such a principle stands in opposition to the whole theory of poetry as we have considered it. We may realize fully the imaginative pleasure alluded to, and concede that such pleasure is derivable from the skilful representation of human character under any aspect. But this pleasure does not seem to be the pleasure proper to poetry. It seems ultimately reducible to what we should call "interest," "entertainment"; and merely to interest and entertain seems to be the proper function of prose. As we understand poetry, its object is to elevate the soul, not to amuse it. The pleasure afforded by the literal transcript of an unnoble character cannot rise higher than entertainment or interest, however low it may fall.

But realism has another quarrel with the position of the idealist: it is untrue. To exhibit high nobility in human character is, we are told, simple exaggeration. Men in actual life are not noble, their motives are not lofty, the passions as we really find them are not elevating forces, but the contrary. The noble character as conceived by the

[1] As a matter of fact, the exaggerated realist often descends even lower than his theory. Though he professes to be true to nature and to abjure the heightening effect of ennobling themes, he ends by portraying not nature in its entirety, but merely what is disagreeable and degraded, and even what is literally foul, in nature.

idealist is so rare, so exceptional in actual experience as to be abnormal and therefore unnatural.[1] The idealist transports us out of this world into another, and his appeal to our imagination is flat and unconvincing. — The answer to this contention of the realist will serve to define more accurately the limits of idealization in its bearing on poetic truth. But first let us remark that according to any theory of art there must be a certain exaggeration in the artist's portrayal, that is, a certain selection of details to the neglect of others. There never was in life a conversation so compressed and direct as even the realistic dramatist must needs employ. No character ever reveals himself so distinctly in a short space as the character in a play. Every living person has minor attributes that the artist neglects. Such portrayal neither realism nor idealism would regard as a departure from the truth of naturalness. Both the realist and the idealist do in fact lay stress on one or other aspect of a personality, in order to arrest the attention and impress the imagination of the reader. Only, the idealist selects and intensifies the higher or noble aspect. Now to say that noble traits are so unusual in the course of human experience as to be abnormal and to belong to the category of freaks of nature is a statement which, though it can hardly be controverted on *a priori* grounds, does seem to be mere cynicism. Would the normal man of all ages of the world concede that an ignoble view of humanity was the only true view? Is there no such thing in the world as heroism or devotion or ennobling love? Is even the lofty love that is the theme of Francis Thompson's "Love in Dian's Lap," so unreal as to be unconvincing to the imagination of man? The answer must eventually rest with each individual.

11. The Limitations of Idealism. — Idealism in art, quite as well as realism, holds to the canon that the truth of natural-

[1] See what was said above about truth to nature.

ness must be sedulously safeguarded, that the delineation of life must not be so exalted as to leave the impression of unreality, that idealization must not be carried to such an extreme that the imagination of the reader refuses to follow. And so the canon of truth sets a limit to the canon of idealization. In actual life, which is the standard of naturalness, while we refuse to admit that no man is noble or has his noble aspect, we must needs grant that every man, if regarded with any degree of completeness, is imperfect, that no man is free from fault or exempt from human weakness. It follows that, when a human character is represented in detail, as happens in the drama, truth requires it to be invested with faults as well as virtues. The imagination is less impressed by flawless perfection than by a nobility tinctured with defects that humanize it. Aristotle himself requires that his hero be less than a perfect being. Therefore a balance must be struck between naturalness and the selecting and heightening process of idealism. To what precise degree imperfections may be emphasized and exploited must be left to the judgment of the poet. The point to bear in mind is this, that they are introduced not for their own sake, but as a check upon exaggeration, as a necessary means of convincing the imagination, lest the portrait of nobility without imperfection fail to produce the impression of reality.

EXERCISES

1. Show the absence of clear, definite thinking in Golden Treasury, CCXXXII, CCXXXIX, CCCVII, and compare with the following in the same respect: CCLXXXVI, CCCI, CCCIV.

2. Show how the thought is ill-adapted to the elevation of the imagery in CCXLII.

3. Show how Shakespeare succeeds in producing the impression of insincerity in the protestations of affection expressed by Goneril and Regan. See "King Lear," Act I, Sc. 1, ll. 50–75.

4. A false ideal in Golden Treasury, CCCXXVI.

5. Observe from what point of view nature is idealized in CCCIII and CLXXXVI; and character idealized in CCXVII and CCXX.

6. For the expression of curious rather than emotional views, the student may examine Robert Browning's "Two Poets of Croisic"; and, for excessive realism in description, the same writer's "A Likeness."

7. Point out a curious want of consistency in Horace's description of Cleopatra in "Odes," Book I, No. 37.

8. Why would you call Golden Treasury, CCXXXVII an impressionist poem? Describe as accurately as possible the impression it creates.

CHAPTER V

Expression

1. The Medium of Expression. — The principles laid down in the preceding sections concerning the emotional, imaginative, and intellectual elements in poetry will be found, *mutatis mutandis*, to be common to all the fine arts. For each one of the arts, in its own degree and after its own fashion, aims to exhibit emotion, and makes its appeal to the emotions through the mind and imagination; and so the laws that govern the artistic handling of these three faculties are fundamentally the same whether poetry be concerned, or painting, sculpture, music.

But we now turn our attention to that which differentiates these arts from one another, viz., to the medium by which the emotion, the emotional idea, and the imaginative perception are externalized, that is, are transferred from the mind of the artist who conceives them to the work of art, and so to the minds of other men who hear or read or behold. In the art of poetry this medium is language. As the painter uses color and surface-form to give expression to his conceptions, and as the musician uses musical sound, so the poet uses the word, the phrase.

2. The Superiority of Language as a Medium. — And here we may observe that, if we compare together these three vehicles of expression, if we compare language, musical sound, and the painter's colors, we shall find that each has its own effectiveness, and each its own limitations; yet that, all considered, poetry possesses in language a more perfect power to

reach the mind and heart of man than any other art. For painting exhibits directly to the mind the form and color of the concrete object, and does this with an exactness and vividness that it is impossible for language to emulate; music too, through harmony and melody, represents the nearest approach we can conceive to the direct expression of emotion, and what music achieves by direct expression poetry can only suggest. But, on the other hand, neither painting nor music has the power to express directly the thought itself of the mind; they can but suggest it with more or less distinctness, often with only the faintest intimation. The power to express thought directly belongs to poetry through the medium of language. This gives an immense breadth and power to poetry. There are endless delicate shades of thought which can never be represented or suggested by music or painting, or by any mere image of an external object, but which do come within the range of language to express, to say nothing at all of images which lie outside the power of any vehicle but language to convey. Any poem at all will reveal this superiority of poetry over the other arts; any poem, even the most purely external and descriptive, will contain conceptions that are beyond the power of any art but poetry to convey.

3. Thought and Expression. — Before proceeding to the consideration of the poet's use of language, we must understand correctly the relation that exists between thought and expression. In this matter two extremes are to be avoided. We are not to consider expression as an embellishment superadded to the thought. But neither are we to consider thought and expression identical and inseparable. Expression is neither. It is a replica of the thought, but, like every replica, distinct from the original.

4. Expression — the Externalizing of the Writer's Mind. — First, then, we say that style is a replica of the writer's

thought, and by thought, in this connection, we understand the conception in the concrete as it exists in the mind of the writer; that is, suffused with his personality, his imagination, his emotion; in other words, the writer's *impression* in its totality. The expression is an image of this colored thought. It is not a decoration laid on by a sort of after-process, designed to make a dull thought beautiful. We are not to think of the poet, any more than of the writer of prose, as first conceiving an idea, and then, as it were, proceeding to disguise its nakedness by an elegant vesture of words, patching together tropes and figures, this image and that, and smoothing all by a succession of melodious vowel and consonant sounds. But rather, whatever imagery is presented in the expression is found there because the imagery represents the manner of the poet's thinking; if the language is figurative, it is because the poet thought in figures; if it is musical, it is because the idea in the poet's exalted emotional state was itself musical in his mind. Thus the expression is the photograph of the poet's soul.

Thus, to use a very simple example, if I should write "To-day the temperature is low; the sky is overcast; and spirits run low," one may say, if one must, that this is the same idea, in the naked abstract, as is expressed in the verse,

"The day is cold, and dark, and dreary."

But no one would say that they both stand for the same manner of thinking, nor did the poet conceive the idea as first expressed, and then undertake to condense it and to versify it, till it took the second shape. The thoughts themselves are different in their emotional and imaginative values. The second expression is the photograph of the thought of a poet, the first the photograph of the thought of a diarist or annalist.

To conceive style otherwise, to conceive it not as a mere externalizing of the mind of the writer, but as a dress for thought, leads to artificiality and affectation in the use of language. It worked

this result in the followers of Pope in the eighteenth century. Pope had announced that "expression was the dress of thought," and his imitators, without his wit or genius, undertook to borrow the dress he had woven, to clothe their own meagre conceptions, and hence their words, proceeding not from the heart, but culled from an external source, lost their power to charm the reader.

Note the tiresome diffuseness of the following, — the otiose epithets, the inevitable apostrophe, the mythological machinery, the artificial balancing of phrases, and general want of inspiration: —

> Winds of the north, restrain your icy gales,
> Nor chill the bosom of these happy vales.
> Hence in dark heaps, ye gathering clouds, revolve,
> Disperse, ye lightnings, and ye mists, dissolve;
> Hither emerging from your orient skies,
> Botanic Goddess, bend thy radiant eyes;
> O'er these soft scenes assume thy gentle reign,
> Pomona, Ceres, Flora in thy train.
>
> — DARWIN, "The Botanic Garden."

When this goes on for page after page, the mind of the reader grows torpid and ceases to act; and the reason is that the mind of the writer had ceased to act first; not thought, but words were his concern.

5. But not Identical with the Writer's Impression. — But if style is not the mere dress of thought, neither is it identical with thought. This would seem unnecessary to deny, were it not insisted upon by recent critics in their protest against the opposite error.[1] Many a man has the thought, the emotion, the exalted imagination of the poet, and yet remains destitute of the complementary gift that would make of him a poet, the gift of expression. And was there ever a poet who for all his gift of expression could adequately render into language what was in his heart? Expression

[1] See, for instance, Mr. A. C. Bradley, "Oxford Lectures on Poetry," Lecture I. Also B. Croce, "Æsthetic," Chap. I.

after all is only a shadowy image of the soul, and every language is in a measure a foreign language to the heart of man.

Various Aspects of Style

Having established the foregoing principles, we come now to the use which the poet makes of language, and, as in examining the substance of poetry we considered the emotions, the imagination, and the intellect, so too in the matter of expression we may have recourse to the same division, and treat of the intellectual, imaginative, and emotional aspects of style.

6. The Intellectual Aspect of Style. — Here we may class the structural features of composition, the building up of the poem into a complete and organized whole. It is this structural design in any work of art that manifests a guiding intelligence operating in its production. Design implies purpose, the conscious contemplation of an end and concentration in the pursuit of it. It is the precise note that distinguishes intelligent workmanship from the work of chance or unregulated impulse. Hence, though it may be too much to say that the structure of the poem is the most important of all the elements of composition, we must believe, with Aristotle, that the structure, or rather the purpose that organizes the structure, governs every other feature of style, and that everything else is valuable simply in proportion as it reaches towards the purpose contemplated in the whole work.

(*a*) *Unity.* — The first result of purpose, and consequently the first manifestation of structural design, is unity. The writer looking towards his single end will choose and reject with that in view. What turns him aside from that, however slightly, will be repudiated unsparingly; what contributes to his end will be consistently adopted.

He will begin his work decisively, and, when his end is fully secured, will be decisive in making a conclusion.

In narrative poetry this essential unity will forbid loitering over a more or less irrelevant introduction or sauntering on after the story is finished. In lyric poetry a single emotional idea, complex it may be, but still coherent, will be introduced, will be developed, will be finished, with precision, without defect and without superfluity.[1]

(*b*) *Progression or Climax.* — This is the second feature of structural composition. Dominated still by the inspiring purpose of his work, the writer *progresses without halt* to its accomplishment. He does not run forward and backward, uncertainly, as if bewildered; every step is a distinct advance toward the goal. This progression achieves the kind of climax that is required in every artistic work of whatever kind.

In a narrative the progression is toward the denouement, while the significance of each episode gathers in intensity as one succeeds the other toward the end. The progression of a lyric may be either the progression of *amplification*, where the lyrical thought is intensified by accumulated details, as in Nash's "Spring Song," or by *extension*, where the introductory conception opens out into another, and this into a third, and so on, until the thought is set forth in its completeness, as in Herrick's "Daffodils."

(*c*) *Proportion.* — Purpose still will be the determining factor here. For it is this that decides the relative value of the parts that make up the whole of the poem; and to give due value to the parts is what we call proportion. A keen concentration upon his purpose will prevent the

[1] It is the purpose of the present chapter to examine the broad outlines of structure and the theory underlying them. The details that govern the building of the epic, the tragedy, and the lyric, are treated in the special chapters devoted to the species of poetry, where also examples are to be found.

writer from hovering unduly over a detail that is attractive in itself, but is of little value for the general end in view.

Thus in a narrative he will not develop every episode to the same degree; nor will he be tempted to develop it because of its own isolated effectiveness, but because of its effectiveness as a contribution to the purpose aimed at in the whole tale. And in lyric poetry, too, proportion postulates a greater prominence for the main idea than for its subsidiaries, which greater prominence is secured sometimes by more extended, sometimes by more emphatic, treatment.

NOTE. — We have called the foregoing qualities the intellectual features of expression; but it must be borne in mind that they cannot be properly secured by the intellect alone without the aid of emotion and imagination. In poetry not even the outline can be effectively sketched by a logical process merely. It is only under the stimulus of these two other powers that the mind can infuse into the plan the germ of life. Any plan of a poem that is the product of cold, intellectual effort is a skeleton literally, and however garbed in language will in all likelihood never possess more than the semblance of life. When the poet works in the right way, his plan does not appeal to his mind as a row of propositions; it comes to him, not as a skeleton, but rather as a shadowy vision, which, impressed by his own mind, as it acts under the stimulus of emotion and imagination, grows into shape, into greater and greater distinctness, unity, order, and proportion.

Important as is this feature of style, it must be said that it is not the virtue most characteristic of our own literature. English poets have been prone to undervalue structural effects in the pursuit of details and in the indulgence of impulse. Chaucer himself, who knew so well how to interest himself and his readers in a narrative, finds it possible in the "Nonnes Preestes Tale" to wander away into two other totally distinct stories and to

consume with these nearly one fourth of his total number of lines. Shakespeare, who knew so well how to write a play, can halt the action of his most rapid tragedy, "Macbeth," with a long and needless dialogue between Malcolm and Macduff. And other poets, with more perhaps of a lyrical than narrative instinct, such as Spenser, Keats, Wordsworth, and others, sometimes show scant courtesy to structural form at all. English critics sometimes allege that English poets sacrifice structure for the sake of vitality, as if structure and life were in some way antithetical, whereas in truth structure is the manifestation of the highest life in man, the life of intelligence. What this really amounts to is that we sacrifice, not structure for life, but the life of the intellect for the life of the undisciplined emotions, — which is a more than questionable sacrifice.

7. The Imaginative Aspect of Style. — Under this head we may class descriptive language, graphic nouns and verbs, profuse epithets, word-pictures, similes and metaphors, and the various other picturesque resources of words, that assimilate poetry in some degree to the art of painting.

But it is of importance first to note the difference between the resources of expression as found in these two arts. There are two points of contrast between poetry and painting from which we derive principles governing poetic expression.

(*a*) *Poetry and Painting.* — The first of these is that painting exhibits the concrete object directly to the sense of sight, whereas poetry addresses directly not the eye but the imagination, *i.e.* the mental imaging power of the reader. Hence the poet must rely for his effectiveness upon the activity of this faculty in those for whom he writes. If the painter puts the rainbow on the canvas, it is inevitable that the spectator should see its details; if the poet puts it in verse, it is quite possible that the reader will get the idea of the rainbow without the image of the rainbow, and hence lose its precise poetic value. Hence it may not be sufficient for the poet merely to name a concrete object, but he will be

under the necessity of stimulating the imagination by the force and vividness of his verbal presentation of it. He will emphasize by his choice of diction a graphic detail; he will substitute the striking features of a scene for its more commonplace aspect.

Instead of writing "The host of Cherubim plucked their swords from the scabbard," Milton fires the imagination with the words: —

> Outflew
> Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
> Of mighty Cherubim. — "Paradise Lost," Book I, ll. 663–665.

Instead of "the boat was swept over the sea by the wind," Shelley writes: —

> A whirlwind swept it on
> Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
>
> — "Alastor."

And Shakespeare, describing the morning sun illumining mountain, meadow and stream, pours out his heart in these glowing words: —

> Full many a glorious morning have I seen
> Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
> Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
> Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.
>
> — Sonnet 33.

Thus by the keen emphasis of language the poet may rival and surpass the vividness of the painting.

Among other advantages which this appeal to the imagination rather than to the sense of sight puts in the hands of the poet is the power of comparison. This the painter can only suggest in the remotest degree; the poet ranges through heaven and earth, whatever his subject may be, and can illustrate, enrich, and intensify it by association with the beauty of the universe. Of this gift of comparison the poet makes unsparing use; and it shows the richness of poetry to observe how almost every line of verse calls on

this practice of comparison, by the employment of simile, metaphor, or the lighter and quicker suggestiveness of implied metaphor.[1]

(*b*) In description, not of action or movement, but of an extended stationary object, such as a landscape, or an edifice, or the human countenance, poetry stands at a certain disadvantage to painting. The reason is, our mind has been educated through the senses to take in the details of such an object (let us say, of a landscape) more or less simultaneously. It gathers the picture as a practically united whole, as a single, complex impression. This is so far the case that it is impossible to get any proper impression of a landscape by examining it piecemeal. No one, for instance, can form an effective image of a panorama of hills and forest and river by examining it in small separate sections, as if through a field glass, nor of a cathedral by studying separately the details of spire, portal, gable; nor of the beauty of a face by a separate scrutiny of eyes, brow, lips. The effectiveness in each case comes not from the details but from the *tout ensemble*, and the imagination seems powerless (perhaps because it is not habitually called on in this way) to construct the *ensemble* from the separate perception of the parts. For an effective image of the whole we must see the details simultaneously.

Now painting, of course, does furnish the details of scene or feature in a single view. But poetry from the nature of language must convey the details successively, in fragments, one after another. It cannot give the assemblage of them at once. Hence it cannot vividly convey a picture of a detailed stationary object. After enumerating the details the imagination fails to piece them together satisfactorily, and at best a vague impression is the result.

This limitation of poetry in description was mentioned

[1] See chapter on Poetic Diction.

by Lessing in the "Laokoon," but we must note that it is not a matter of theory in the least, but a fact of actual experience, which we may verify at any moment. Let any one for instance ask himself whether after reading Tennyson's "Lotus-Eaters" he can view that landscape as a whole, or after reading the description of Helen quoted in the "Laokoon" (Chapter XX) he can form an image of these details taken together.

Why, then, we may ask, do the poets so utterly disregard this fact of experience? Why do Spenser, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Wordsworth, and others, revel in such extended description? The reason is precisely that they are content to convey a *vaguè* image. And in poetry this is often perfectly legitimate. What is essential in poetry is not the landscape, but the emotional impression, and, if landscape is employed, it is only as a means of heightening this emotional result. Consequently the poet may attempt to use a series of impressional details, little caring, provided they be coherent and intelligible, whether or not they blend in our imagination into a simultaneous whole. How much of Vergil's scenery is almost studiously vague, yet without failing for this reason of its poetic power. It seems to be a misconception of the nature of poetry and ultimately a confusion of the ends of the two arts of painting and poetry, to debar it the use of extended description of stationary objects because it cannot render them as distinctly as painting.

8. Suggestive Description. — But besides detailed description the poet has discovered the means of *suggesting* a scene or an impression by the magic of a single word or phrase. This is the art of suggestive word-painting. Words, simple and insignificant taken separately, become endowed with a new and strange vitality when thus skilfully combined, and the phrase exercises a kind of spell over the im-

agination which the word-elements of the phrase do not account for.

Thus, to quote an example from Coleridge, Prospero tells Miranda in "The Tempest":

> One midnight
> Fated to the purpose, did Antonio open
> The gates of Milan, and, in the dead of darkness,
> The ministers for the purpose hurried thence
> *Me and thy crying self.* — Act I, Sc. 2, ll. 128 ff.

The single phrase "thy crying self" seizes the imagination more potently than any list of details. For other examples, see chapter on Poetic Diction.

The power of such phrase lies beyond analysis, yet some of the secret we may possibly discover. It partly resides in the power of the poet to seize upon the word that will best express the impressional heart and core of the situation; partly in the very unexpectedness of the combination of words, united with its appropriateness, which startles and spurs into activity the imagination of the reader; partly, at least in many instances, in the contributing suggestiveness of the vowel and consonant sounds and the metrical music.[1]

The use of suggestive word-painting, so prevalent a resource in latter-day poetry, lies open to one danger. It is the liability to think more of the phrase than of the idea underlying the phrase, the danger of admiring the phrase for its own sake, which is the cardinal sin of all expression. The very fact that the phrase is startling, that the combination of words is itself impressive, tends to arrest attention to them, and when this attention to the phrase overbalances the attention on the thing expressed, the poet is convicted of merely weaving words, and genuine poetry has ceased. Thus Matthew Arnold has observed that, in the single poem,

[1] See chapter on Versification.

"Isabella," Keats uses a greater number of such artful phrases than is to be found in all the works of Shakespeare.

9. The Emotional Aspect of Expression. — To what we may call the emotional aspect of expression belong various turns of phrase, various abnormal modes of utterance, which are prompted by the emotional attitude of the writer, and so tend to awaken an emotional state in the reader. These are treated in the chapter on Poetic Diction.

But the chief medium of emotional expression lies in the music of language. Music itself being the purest expression of emotion, poetry has adopted the resources of this art and has created for itself a conventional rhythmical and melodic system, reduced more or less to rule and precept, which we call the art of prosody. The details of this must be reserved for a separate section of this book. In general, however, we may remark as follows:

(*a*) It is not easy to overrate the importance of metre and melody as a factor in the expression of emotion. The verse-music of the highest poetry contributes more than any other single element of pure expression to cast an emotional spell over the mind, contributes more to this effect than anything else except the idea itself and the image that the line of poetry conveys. Indeed, we need not except the idea and image, for in some not wholly mysterious way these also are wrapped up with and become an integral part of the music itself. Often the most splendid lines may be robbed of their power not only by an alteration of the metre, but by a dislocation of the cadence that underlies the metre.

Let us take for example the splendid lines of Romeo standing by the tomb of Juliet: —

> O, here
> Will I set up my everlasting rest,
> And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
> From this world-wearied flesh. — Act V, Sc. 3, ll. 109 ff.

or the following from "Measure for Measure": —

> If I must die,
> I will encounter darkness as a bride,
> And hug it in mine arms. — Act III, Sc. 1, ll. 83 ff.

or Hamlet's last words to Horatio: —

> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story. — Act V, Sc. 2, ll. 357.

If any one fails to perceive how much of the greatness of such lines is due to the music, let him alter the rhythm and observe with what fatal effect he does so. Thus: —

> O here will I set up my rest
> Eternal, and shake off the yoke
> Of inauspicious stars from this
> World-wearied flesh.

(*b*) And yet the use of verse-music can be exaggerated. Reference was made above to the danger in word-painting of setting more value on the phrase than on the object behind the phrase. The same propensity besets the poet's versification. Whenever he makes his *primary* appeal to the ear and not to the mind, he leaves the domain of poetry and enters the domain of the art of music; and at that instant his poetry begins to degenerate. Not merely the absolute sacrifice of sense to sound, which is too obvious an offense to call for remark, but the mere subordination of sense to sound, betrays in the poet a confusion of the two arts of poetry and music. The test is not difficult. Does the poet fasten his attention chiefly on the sweetness of his numbers, — is the reader's attention *in consequence* distracted from the thought by the verse-melody, rather than helped by it to realize the thought? In this case it is music rather than

poetry that he produces, or rather he is attempting to blend into one the resources of two distinct arts, an attempt that is never without fatal results.

Swinburne was, beyond all doubt, betrayed into this mistake by his power of manipulating language musically. Constantly, the voluptuous music is more dominant than the sense, and seems to cast an hypnotic slumber over the intelligence of the reader instead of stimulating it into activity. Even the well-known choral odes in "Atalanta in Calydon" seem to suffer from an exaggeration of musical effects.

We do not contend that the sense is sacrificed to the sound in such verses, but that the music is so obtrusive that it distracts the mind, and the gratification of the sense of hearing dulls the activity of the intelligence. Quite different is the effect of rhythm and melody in the passages quoted above from Shakespeare; in these the music is not a thing apart, but so incorporated with the sense that it is only upon reflection and analysis that we perceive how much the prosody contributes to the effectiveness of the idea.

From what has been said in the foregoing pages we may understand the supreme importance of expression in the art of poetry. Not only what the poet says, but also his mode of utterance, is the gauge of the value of his poetry, because it is nearly always the measure of the emotional sincerity and intensity of his thought.

But true as this is, it is also true that the poet's style is important, not as an end in itself, but solely as a means to represent the living idea that is within him, that is, the idea colored with imagination and emotion. Whenever the style attracts attention to itself, whenever language claims admiration for its own sake rather than for what it represents, it exceeds its competence, it turns traitor to its own essential function, and poetry becomes false art. And the critic who ventures to assert that it is unimportant what the poet says provided he says it well, is surely throwing open the door

to the gravest offenses in poetry and all art, to meaningless music, meaningless word-painting, and eventually to meaningless symbolism.

EXERCISES

1. Criticize in the light of the preceding principles the following remarks: —

"Le style c'est l'homme."

"Style is a thinking out into language."

"The most excellent authors lose most of their graces when we find them literally translated."

2. If style is the exact image of what is in one's mind, what justification is there for laboring to perfect one's style? See Newman's "Lecture on Literature."

3. What difference is there between what is called the "matter" and the "manner" of a written composition?

4. Show the unity and the development of the form in the following lyrics: Golden Treasury, LXI, CLXII, CCXCV.

5. Point out instances of effective word-painting in the following: Golden Treasury, CCXLIX, CCCIII, CCCXVI.

The Four Chief Poetic Tendencies

The general laws or principles of Poetry that we have thus far considered often stand in seeming opposition one to another. They make, as it were, conflicting claims upon the genius of the poet. Thus the demands of the imagination tend to override the demands of the intellect; verse-melody tends to exalt itself above verse-meaning, and so forth. According to his individual temperament the poet may be led in one direction or another by such opposite influences; and it is helpful, for proper appreciation of his poetry, to observe the effect they produce. The chief of these contrary

tendencies are: first, Idealism *vs.* Realism; and secondly, Classicism *vs.* Romanticism.[1]

1. Idealism *vs.* Realism. — In this case the conflicting claims are as follows: (*a*) The claim of *truth to nature:* to copy external nature in the actual details of a given scene; in human nature to represent literally the thoughts and impulses of man as we see him in daily life; this for the purpose of giving the illusion of reality.

(*b*) The claim of *idealization:* to beautify the actual world by aid of the imagination, to intensify the emotional impression by suppressing true but irrelevant details.

There is no fixed law to balance these two claims. The instinct of the individual poet leads him to put more emphasis on the one or the other. If on the former, we recognize the realistic tendency; if on the latter, idealism. Either tendency may run to manifest excess, resulting in *exaggerated* realism or idealism.

The following diagram indicates the position of certain more or less typical representatives of these two tendencies in English literature.

Exaggerated Realism	Realism	Idealism	Exaggerated Idealism
Byron's Satires	Crabbe Wordsworth	Milton Shelley	The Eclogues of Giles and Phineas Fletcher

2. Classicism *vs.* Romanticism. — This is a more intricate subject than the preceding. In general, classicism results from the *conscious* and *deliberate* attitude of the poet in composing, romanticism from spontaneity and free emotion.

[1] For a complete discussion of these tendencies, see Neilson, "Essentials of Poetry." Also the Columbia University "Lectures on Literature" on Classicism and Romanticism.

But this opposition reveals itself in many ways and in every element in the constitution of poetry, and may perhaps be best exhibited in the following diagram. As in the foregoing, each tendency may be exaggerated, whence we have what is known in criticism as Pseudo-Classicism and Ultra-Romanticism.

Pseudo-Classicism	Classicism		Romanticism	Ultra-Romanticism
over-restrained and artificial	composed and self-possessed: general and typical	Emotion	intense—highly personal	prized for its own sake, *i.e.* for the thrill of sensation
uninspired,—and hence conventional	distinct—sharply defined—probable and natural imagery	Imagination	suggestive or haunting—picturesque or marvelous imagery	suggestive to the point of vagueness.
abstract—commonplace	primary and fundamental conceptions	Thought	penetrating to the mysteries of life	"distinct thought the bane of poetry."
rhetorical—conventional	clear—appropriate—congruous	Expression	bold—original	soft—unemphatic—musical.
Darwin	Milton		Shelley	Keats

It should be noted that no single poet (especially no great poet) represents any single tendency purely or exclusively. The names indicated above imply that some or all of the accompanying characteristics dominate the work without absolutely excluding contrary qualities.

PART TWO

THE SPECIES OF POETRY

THE three great divisions of poetry are the lyric, the narrative, and the dramatic. In lyric poetry the poet utters his personal emotions or reflections, giving more prominence to these than to the situation in which he finds himself. In narrative poetry he describes an action or event, giving more prominence to these than to his own reflections about them. In dramatic poetry he sets before us characters speaking and acting, and refrains from any expression in his own character. Of these three species the first is purely subjective to the poet; the second is objective; the third is objective to the poet, subjective to the characters. Again, lyric poetry is always in present time, that is, it represents what the poet *feels* as he writes; narrative poetry deals with the past, that is, with what *has occurred;* dramatic poetry unites the past with the present, that is, what has occurred is represented as now *occurring.*

We shall consider each of these main divisions in detail, and afterwards glance at certain minor forms intermediate between them.

CHAPTER I

Narrative Poetry

POETIC narrative must, of course, observe all the essential principles that govern the construction of a prose narrative; it must possess unity, coherence, and proportion; it must have a starting point, a period of suspense, a climax of interest and the like. These characteristics are not distinctive of poetry.

The features in which poetic narrative differs from prose narrative are chiefly these; that the poem is more emotional, the prose more matter-of-fact; the latter offers more minute details of a commonplace character, the former confines itself to broader and more salient features; the latter is more subtle and analytic, the former more general and picturesque.

The principal formal type of narrative poetry is the Epic, whose structure we shall now examine.

THE EPIC

The Epic is a poem extended in length, narrating an action of power and interest, centred about a single hero.

1. The End of the Epic. — The generic motive of the epic is to excite *admiration*. In this it is differentiated from tragedy, which aims to awaken *fear and pity*. Its essential note, therefore, is triumph over difficulties, and, other things being equal, the intenser the difficulty, and the more complete the victory, the better is this purpose attained.

2. The Action. — The epic is essentially a poem of action, and is purely objective. The poet, though he writes *in propria persona*, does not allow his personality to appear, nor does he give expression to reflections, observations, moralizings of his own. His thought is ever on the external object, never on his own heart and soul.

The nearest approach to a subjective attitude occurs when the poet pauses for a moment to invoke the muse as he enters upon a momentous part of his story. Yet even here the situation itself rather than the poet's own feeling is kept chiefly prominent. See, among other examples, "Æneid," Book VI, lines 264–268. Milton, however, takes more liberty in this regard, as in the well-known reference to his blindness at the beginning of the third book of "Paradise Lost."

The action of the epic is broader and freer than the action of the drama. This means that it is longer, more varied in character, and admits incidents or scenes more or less irrelevant to the main action. But it means more than this. In dramatic poetry the action is subordinate to the characters; it originates chiefly from the activity of the characters; their energies, hopes, fears, create the action, and their suffering is the climax of the action. In the epic the movement is more independent of the characters. The hero is indeed in the thick of the action, but not identified with it as in the drama.[1]

Lastly, the action of the epic is momentous in import, and hence is naturally associated with the national or religious traditions of a people.

3. The Unity. — The epic portrays one complete action, its beginning, its progress, its end. Thus the action of the "Æneid" comprises the migration of Æneas from Troy to Latium, that of the "Odyssey" the return of Odysseus to Ithaca. Further, in setting forth this one action the

[1] See, for illustration, under Dramatic Poetry, p. 110.

poet has one motif, one conception which dominates his poem and gives color to the action. Thus the destructive wrath of Achilles, in the "Iliad," and, in the "Æneid,"

"Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem."

This unity, however, as has been indicated, has not that compactness which dramatic unity requires. The action, besides being far more extended in length, admits greater freedom of treatment. It does not require the steady advance to a climax and the steady recoil which belong to the drama, and it freely admits episodes, *i.e.* subsidiary incidents that are not essential to the progress of the main action, but at the same time are not incongruous with it. They enliven the action and afford variety without impairing the general effect.

An episode is any incident which does not form a link in the chain of events leading to the conclusion of the poem, or, in other words, an incident which could be sacrificed without destroying an essential of the plot. Such, for instance, is the sixth book of the "Æneid," and the games celebrated in the fifth book.

4. The Development. — (*a*) The poem often opens with an invocation of the Muse, and a formal statement of the theme. See the "Iliad," "Odyssey," and the lofty invocation of the Holy Ghost in "Paradise Lost."

(*b*) After this preamble, the narrative proper may begin with the initial steps of the action itself, as in the "Iliad," or may begin in the middle of the story, the previous part being in this case taken up later in the poem by way of a description put in the mouth of one of the characters. This so-called "ordo præposterus" is followed in the "Odyssey" (Books 9 and 12) and in the "Æneid" (Books 2 and 3).

(*c*) In the progress of the action two essential features are to be noted, a complication and its solution. The former

is that part of the action in which the chief character is involved in difficulties, and struggles against the adverse power of circumstance, or fate, or personal foes. Minor complications and solutions may run throughout the poem, but, as there is essentially one action, so there is one primary complication, creating various embarrassments for the hero. These he may overcome singly as the poem progresses, but the final victory is reserved for the end.

This complete subdual of the opposing force is the primary solution and the final act of the poem. It is of moment that this victory should come about naturally, *i.e.* not by the miraculous intervention of superhuman power, nor by an unaccountable accident unforeseen and unprovided for in the poem, but by force of events calculated from afar, and by the working out of natural causes operating in the narrative.

(*d*) Finally, the conclusion which follows the solution should be concise. Here is no place for episodes, for pauses, for description, or anything that clogs the movement as it hastens to the end.

The preceding outline represents what one may call the typical epic. Needless to say, not every epic is constructed rigidly according to type. Other poetic qualities may avail to compensate in great measure for defective construction, such as intensity, rapidity, vividness, and so forth. The above sketch is a more or less conventional ideal toward which every epic may be expected to approach.

The foregoing precepts of epic poetry may be illustrated by the following sketch of the "Æneid."

(*a*) *The action* consists of the wanderings of Æneas from Troy to Latium to found the Roman nation. This gives the essential unity to the poem; it also imparts to it a national interest.

(*b*) In his journeying the hero is continually struggling against the malign influence of Juno, who is bent on thwarting his design.

This constitutes the *primary complication;* and the eventual triumph of Æneas, in the last book, the *primary solution.*

(1) The introduction, consisting of theme and invocation, is contained in the first twelve lines of the poem.

(2) The poet next plunges into the middle of the action. Æneas is revealed in the sixth year of his wanderings. He encounters a storm stirred up by Juno, from which he escapes and is cast on the African coast. (This peril and the escape represent one of the many *minor complications and solutions.* Book 1.)

(3) Books 2, 3, 4 are concerned with the infatuation of Dido for Æneas, from which he eventually extricates himself. (Another minor complication and solution.)

In the course of his entertainment by Dido, the hero narrates the events of the six years preceding the opening of the poem, — his escape from Troy, his adventures in Thrace, Crete, Epirus, and Sicily. (Ordo præposterus.)

(4) Book 5 describes the funeral games held in honor of his departed sire (an episode), — and another minor complication and solution, viz., the firing of the ships and the quenching of the flames by a downpour of rain.

(5) The whole of Book 6 is a long episode, the descent of Æneas into Hades to visit the shade of Anchises. During this episode the great national import of the poem is kept in view by frequent allusions to Roman and Italian names and customs, and particularly by the vision of Rome's future heroes, granted to Æneas before his return to the upper world.

(6) Books 7 and 8 narrate how Æneas is disappointed in suing for the hand of Lavinia, daughter of King Latinus, and the beginning of his war with his arch-enemy Turnus. (This begins the final complication.)

(7) Books 9 and 10 describe Æneas's peril in the war and his partial success. This continual battling is a preparation for the final solution of the poem. (Final complication — continued.)

(8) Book 11 is taken up with the burial of Pallas (an episode); the attack on Turnus in his stronghold. (Final complication — continued.)

(9) In Book 12 Juno succumbs to the power of destiny, and

withdraws her opposition to Æneas, — Turnus is slain at the hand of Æneas, and the hero's triumph is complete. This is the solution of the fable.

(10) A conclusion proper to the poem is wanting. It ends abruptly with the death of Turnus. We should expect some hundred lines or more, celebrating the victory of Æneas, and bringing him into the possession of what he has toiled and fought for.

Here, then, we find a model of the epic in unity and construction, with splendid variety both in treatment and in incident, especially in the first six books. Besides these qualities we find others which, even more than the constructive merits of the poem, give it so high a place in literature. These are: —

(1) A perfect mastery of versification, which is made to rise and fall and throb with the varying emotions of the poem.

(2) A sustained dignity of tone that is hardly short of marvelous in so extended a poem.

(3) Felicity of literary expression in choice of word and phrase.

(4) A quiet pathos that is peculiar to the "Æneid" and is characteristic of Vergil's outlook upon human life.

The poem fails conspicuously in character portrayal. Æneas is not a living being, but an abstraction. He is supposed to be without fault or imperfection, and is so hedged in by divine protection that he entirely fails to interest us in his personality.[1]

5. The Primitive Epic. — It is customary to divide epic poems into primitive epics and epics of art. It is a division based on the origin of the poem, but this difference of origin results in other more important differences of style and manner.

The primitive epic is represented by the "Iliad," the "Odyssey," "Beowulf," and the early heroic poems of various nations. These epics originate, not from an individual poet, but from the heart of the whole nation in its infancy. We find in the first place short minstrel lays commemorating the legendary exploits of the nation's hero. These lays passing

[1] See, however, F. W. Myers' "Essay on Vergil" for an elaborate justification of the character of Æneas.

from mouth to mouth are gradually sifted, selected, embellished to suit the popular imagination, and thus grow to be a concrete expression of the nation's ideals. Afterwards there comes the individual poet who gathers and refashions them in the form of a continuous narrative; and thus the scattered ballads become an epic poem. However, these individual poets must not be supposed to use the forms and canons of conscious art in molding the ancient material into an epic, but rather poets endowed with enough breadth of vision to conceive a long poem, and a sufficient power of expression to give it just utterance, yet living near enough to the ballad era to believe in the legend and to be inspired by the ideal it portrays, and so to treat the subject with naïve sincerity.

The poetic quality we look for in the primitive epic is spontaneity, simplicity, sincerity; the defect will be want of artistic form and imperfect power of expression. "The form (of these epics) is rudimentary, awkward, sometimes even offensive; the characters are not well conceived and analyzed; the action is simplified to excess, and so inadequately treated; the episodes and changes of fortune are poorly prepared and often left unaccounted for, etc."[1] However, in the judgment of the world, two epics have escaped these defects of form and achieved the very summit of poetic excellence, the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey."

6. **The Epic of Art** is the conscious art production of an individual poet, writing according to recognized canons and modeling his work for the most part along the lines of the Homeric epics. Consequently in this style we do not look for the simplicity of a primitive civilization, but a studied dignity of style and elaboration of structural features. Representative epics of art are the "Æneid," the "Divine Comedy," "Paradise Lost," "Orlando Furioso," "Jerusalem Delivered."

[1] J. Verest, S.J., "Manuel de Littérature," p. 379.

Other Narrative Forms

Besides the epic we find in literature a host of narrative poems varying in length from Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh" to Tennyson's "Captain."

The longer poems are distinguished from the epic sometimes by the fact that the action has not the large religious or national significance of the epic, as in Tennyson's "Princess"; sometimes because it does not aim at the strict unity of design possessed by the epic; sometimes by the fact that description obscures the narrative, or purely fanciful creations of the imagination (as dragons, enchanted castles, and the like) detract from the reality and seriousness of the poem. The two latter are distinctive qualities of the romance, as Spenser's "Faery Queen" and the Arthurian legends.

The shorter narratives may be classed as follows: —

(1) Episodes, — brief narratives of actual facts or what are told as facts.

(2) Legends, — fiction with an admixture of fact or founded on fact, and generally referring to primitive times.

(3) Tales, — or narratives of a purely fictitious character.

(4) Fables, — fiction in which the animal creation or inanimate objects are represented as endowed with human character, and generally serving to point some moral truth.

But a more significant division of narrative poetry is based upon the attitude of the poet towards his story; thus we have: —

(1) The purely objective narrative, in which the poet, losing sight of himself, keeps his eye singly upon the fact that he recounts. Such, for instance, are Scott's narrative poems, Keats's "Hyperion."

(2) Narratives in which the subjective element is prominent, and the poet's personal reflections are continually put

forward by way of criticism or commentary on what he narrates. Such are Byron's "Childe Harold," Wordsworth's "Excursion," Shelley's "Alastor."

(3) Dramatic narrative, which puts the story on the lips of a third person and sets it forth professedly from his point of view: examples are Browning's "Ring and the Book," and Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales."

EXERCISES

1. Draw up a sketch of the Odyssey after the style of the sketch of the Æneid given above, showing unity, complications, episodes, etc.

2. Outline a similar epic of your own invention, taking for the hero Columbus, Washington, Wellington, Richard Cœur de Lion.

3. Write a brief essay discussing the imaginative and emotional elements in any of Tennyson's narrative poems, and indicate how the treatment would differ if they were prose.

CHAPTER II

Dramatic Poetry

It is the essential feature of dramatic poetry that the poet speaks not in his own character, but represents another as speaking before us. So considered, it includes not only tragedy, comedy, and allied species of the drama proper, but also dramatic monologues, dialogues, and so-called dramatic lyrics, — pieces never intended for scenic representation at all.

The *drama proper* is a poem intended for representation on the stage. It must be made up of an action, external and visible, that is, contain not merely the discussion of a problem, or the description of an emotional situation, or the evolution of a character. It must represent something done, the passage of the soul from one state to another under the influence of some external and visible condition.

The drama possesses a power over the emotions peculiarly its own. This arises from the fact that it appeals not merely to the mind and imagination, as the other forms of poetry, but to the bodily eye: and for its adequate presentation it calls on the arts of elocution, of scenic painting and decoration, and often of music. Furthermore, it possesses greater compactness and concentration than the epic, and hence leaves a more intense impression,[1] while the epic has the advantage of greater breadth and freedom of treatment and exhibits a wider view of life.

We shall now consider the structure of the chief forms of the drama proper, viz., tragedy and comedy.

[1] See Aristotle, "Poetics," chap. XXVI.

Tragedy

Tragedy may be defined as the representation of a great action involving a fatal issue. But this definition needs to be developed by a consideration of the end of tragedy, also of the dramatis personæ, the fable, and the parts of the action itself.

1. **The End of Tragedy.** — The distinctive end of tragedy, we are told by Aristotle, is to excite (1) pity and (2) fear, and in so doing to effect (3) the purgation of these emotions in the soul. An action is tragic, therefore, which achieves this threefold end.

(1) The pity that tragedy arouses is directed towards the persons of the drama, as we behold them passing through the struggle to the disaster that awaits them at the end. This is apparent.

(2) The fear, however, is for ourselves, lest in the uncertain issues of human life some such evil overtake us. Consequently the fear that tragedy should create is not that alarm for the characters as we see them approaching their doom, which is really only a phase of the pity just alluded to. Rather, it is directed towards our own lives. It is not indeed the fear lest we should find ourselves involved in precisely the same circumstances and the same disaster as the tragic hero, which often is manifestly inconceivable, but rather a vague and remote foreboding of evil hovering over our own lives. It is a sense of awe at the eventualities of that human life in which we are playing our part, and which is symbolized by the tragedy we are witnessing.

A tragic action, therefore, must be one that touches this double note of emotion in the soul; not pity alone, nor fear alone, if it is to be ideally tragic, but both pity and fear. Pity without fear becomes simple pathos, a mere appeal to the

tender emotions. A purely pathetic action is not tragic but melodramatic. A melodrama lacks the greatness and power which we feel in "King Lear" or "Œdipus Tyrannus"; what is wanting is the element of fear or awe, that apprehension of the evils of human life in general, which imparts a tone of solemnity to true tragedy. On the other hand, fear alone without pity, if it were possible to conceive a drama that left this effect upon the soul, would be too self-centred and unsympathetic an emotion for legitimate poetry of any kind.

(3) But besides inspiring fear and pity, we are told that tragic action must effect the "purgation" of these two passions in the soul. Of the many interpretations of this vexed phrase of Aristotle, suffice it to say: [1] —

(*a*) That the purgation or *katharsis* spoken of does not seem to be a purely moral effect; in other words, when we speak of purging fear and pity in the soul, we do not mean that these passions are afforded a worthy object on which to exert themselves.

(*b*) We do not mean by the purgation spoken of that tragedy gives an outlet for these emotions, otherwise pent up within us and suffocated in the soul.

(*c*) But rather we mean that in tragedy fear and pity are relieved of that painful, tormenting, personal element which accompanies them in the experience of actual life. The pity felt in the actual presence of real, not imaginary, sufferings, or the fear felt at the actual approach of a disaster to ourselves, are not poetic emotions at all, because not relieved of the pain and horror that such evils inspire. (See page 21.) In tragedy, because it is kept in the remoter regions of the imagination, this element is eliminated, and hence the passions are purged of their unpoetic quality. Hence tragic action should banish from the stage and relegate behind

[1] See Butcher's Aristotle, p. 239 and ff.

the scenes such horrors as afflict and give pain to the soul when seen. The deliberate murder of the sleeping Duncan, if done before our eyes, would shock the feelings; the pity we feel would be unpurged of pain. The Greek writers of tragedy showed more delicacy of feeling in this regard than our own; but even the tearing out of Gloucester's eyes, though done on the stage, should, one would think, be suggested rather than exhibited in all its gross reality.

It may be urged that fear and pity are emotions proper to other species of poetry, as for instance to the epic, and hence can scarcely be said to be distinctive of tragedy. But these emotions serve to differentiate tragedy from other *dramatic* forms, not from epic, which is sufficiently distinguished by the fact that it is a narrative, not the presentation of an action. And after all, though fear and pity may well have their place in an epic action, yet it is not these emotions, but rather admiration for the struggles and the successes or failures of the hero, which will be found to be the particular effect aimed at in the epic.

2. The Dramatis Personæ. — The primary character, or protagonist, in a tragic action has been sagaciously described by Aristotle. He is not to be vicious, nor yet preeminently perfect, but rather one who will enlist sympathy by his uprightness, and yet involve himself in misfortune by reason of some weakness or frailty.[1]

This doctrine is based on the end of tragedy, to excite fear and pity. The spectacle of an outlaw involved in misfortune by his crimes is not calculated to awaken pity, which is inspired by unmerited misfortune; nor yet to inspire the fear described above, which is to be produced in us by the calamity of a man like ourselves. On the other hand, the fall of an entirely blameless character is calculated to offend our sense of poetic justice and to make indignation for the adversary prevail over pity for the sufferer; it further di-

[1] See "Poetics," chap. XIII.

minishes the tragic effect because the primary character has thus no moral share in causing his own misfortunes.[1]

The history of the Christian martyrs and similar subjects are for this reason unsuitable to tragedy, because death in such circumstances is not a calamity, but a triumph; it is the upward struggle of a soul, superior to death and misfortune; it is a victory, not a defeat; and the prevailing emotion is not fear, not pity, but admiration for the sufferer. Hence this is rather an epic than a tragic subject.

The best tragic characters of ancient and modern times illustrate this precept, notably Œdipus and King Lear. Also the character of Antigone, in whom for all her beauty and bravery we discover a certain hardness, a certain want of sweetness and tact that goes no small way to precipitate, if not to provoke, the hostility of Creon. It is observable also in Macbeth, in whom we witness the struggle and final defeat of climbing ambition in a soul otherwise brave, noble, and strong.[2]

The success of the drama depends to a very large extent upon the poet's portrayal of his characters. This implies —

(1) That the characters be probable, that they speak in the language and with the sentiments suitable to their condition, age, habits, and the like, though the expression must be idealized above the commonplace.

(2) That they be consistent, maintaining the same traits from beginning to end.

(3) Most of all, that they be living realities, not abstractions, not types of heroes or villains. The writer must possess that superior gift, described in a preceding chapter, of suggesting briefly, yet distinctly, an individual character. As in real life, so in the drama, what is individual and personal stimulates our interest, not what is general or typical.

[1] See p. 109.

[2] With regard to the difficulty presented by Shakespeare's "Richard III," see Butcher, Chap. VIII.

(4) Lastly, the personages must be selected with a view to character contrast. The adversary should possess traits that will throw into relief the traits of the primary person, and so also of the other characters that are brought into juxtaposition in the play.

These principles have, for the most part, been discussed and illustrated in an earlier chapter.[1] The rule of character contrast should be particularly noted here. Upon it the effectiveness of the dramatic production depends to a great extent. If the characters are all, as it were, cast in the same mould, the distinctness of the portrayal is greatly dimmed, and their reaction on one another is lessened.

Critics have sometimes complained that Goneril and Regan in "King Lear" are too nearly alike to be clearly distinguishable one from another; but on the other hand, the weak-spirited, garrulous, and sometimes shallow Gloucester throws into relief the gigantic, unsubdued, and intense Lear; so too the frank and credulous Edgar offsets the shrewd, cynical Edmund; Kent and Cordelia stand in opposition to the two treacherous daughters, and the like. In "Œdipus Tyrannus," Creon is cool and calculating, and so serves as a contrast to the impetuous side of the character of Œdipus, and the evasive Jocasta brings out the undaunted straightforwardness of the hero.

3. The Tragic Fable. — (1) *Unity.* — The tragic fable must possess strict unity. It must not be dovetailed into a second action; it must not be left unfinished at the end. That specific action which began the fable must also continue throughout and be brought to its conclusion at the end of the play.

The action, however, may be complex. Thus in many of Shakespeare's plays, two distinct plots are set on foot, run side by side through two or three acts, and are welded together into one conclusion.[2] This does not mar the essential

[1] See pp. 46 ff. [2] See the analysis of "King Lear" given below.

unity of the plot, as would the introduction of a second action, to eke out the play after the first has come to its natural end.

Moreover, this unity should result from the exposition of a single idea or view of life, which is concreted in the fable, as ambition leading to moral ruin, in Macbeth.

Unity is a requirement common to the epic and to tragedy; but a higher degree of unity is required in the drama. It must be more compact. Epic unity is the unity of a panorama; tragic unity that of an edifice. This simple unity is demanded by the fact that the tragedy is shorter in compass than the epic, and the attention of the audience is more closely riveted upon the action. We ill brook interruption and digression, being impatient to pursue the fortunes of the hero to their end. Hence episodes have no place here, and nothing should be admitted that might tend to divert attention from the thread of the action, nothing that does not contribute directly to the development of the story. Observe, for instance, how such a digression from the action as the descent of Æneas into Hades would force its irrelevancy upon us if it occurred in a drama.

(2) *Its Motive Force.* — The action of tragedy as it advances step by step in its development should be impelled by the spiritual activities of the chief characters, rather than by external agencies. The passions, desires, fears, hopes, aspirations, hates of the characters should be the conspicuous forces that cause whatever comes to pass, — rather than the forces of nature, or accidental events, or the activity of such personages as lie outside the main action.

This does not contravene the precept given above concerning dramatic action in general, which prescribes that it should be external and visible, and not be confined to the interior workings of the heart and soul. The action itself,

what is done, must be external and visible, and so fit for scenic presentation, but the force that creates and controls the struggle against these external circumstances is made up of forces of the soul, the great human elemental passions. Tragedy is internal in its forces, external in its activities.

Thus it was perfectly appropriate to the epic poem that a storm at sea should control the destinies of Æneas and fling him upon the coast of Africa; but the incident, however calamitous, is not tragic, because purely external. On the other hand, his entanglement with Dido, and his struggle to escape, are tragic because they proceed from the passions of the actors; it is essentially a soul struggle. So too, Racine, in "Athalie," brings about the death of the queen by a coup d'état contrived quite apart from the activities of Athalie, and the effect is rather epic than dramatic in quality. In "Julius Cæsar," the interest of a similar coup d'état, the assassination, is centred about the tragic struggle in the soul of Brutus between his friendship for Cæsar and his allegiance to the Roman republic.[1] Milton's "Samson Agonistes" is ineffective as a drama from another defect. It is an exhibition of the struggle of the soul, but this is not externalized sufficiently. There is no action.

(3) *Its Truth.* — What has been said of truth in general as applied to poetry bears special reference to tragedy. And the canon of truth, like that of unity, is more exacting here than in the epic. For since in the epic an incident is merely described, it may be possible to disguise an improbable situation either by the heat of the emotion or by drawing away attention from the particulars which give rise to the improbability. In dramatic poetry, when the action is not described, but set before the eyes on the stage, these improbable features cannot be hidden, and at once destroy the illusion of reality.

On the other hand, an improbability that occurs outside

[1] See Woodbridge, "The Drama: its Law and its Technique," p. 25.

the action of the play itself, for instance, an improbability presupposed in the antecedents to the plot, is condoned by Aristotle. "It is as if a sculptor neglected to remove some roughness of support or environment which, he felt, would not come into account against the effect of a highly finished group." Such a case is the curious failure of Œdipus to acquaint himself with the story of Laius when he succeeded the latter on the throne of Thebes.[1]

An instance of this kind of improbability was cited in the discussion of poetic truth.[2] Another instance is the scene on the Scæan gates in the sixth book of the "Iliad." The impossibility of seeing and recognizing the Grecian warriors from the Trojan tower would be instantly felt if represented on the stage.

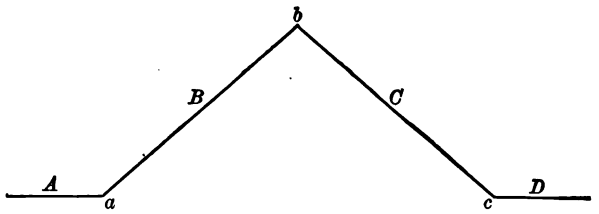
(4) *Its Coherence.* — Both unity and probability are subserved by another requisite of the action. Each step in the story should be connected by a link of causality with what follows, that is, each successive incident should be a natural result of what preceded. Things should not happen by chance and rarely by force of circumstances lying outside the play. By this means the action is kept constantly in motion; we are always advancing from the starting point to the finale.

See in illustration the analysis of the plays given at the end of this chapter.

(5) *Pauses in the Fable.* — Yet there are certain places where this movement of the action must halt or be retarded. Such are momentous points, where an emotional effect must be emphasized, and consequently a delay is necessary to create the desired impression. These pauses may be produced by greater detail in the representation, by monologue and debate, by description, and other similar devices.[3]

[1] Jebb, Introduction to "Œdipus Tyrannus," No. 10.
[2] See p. 66.
[3] See analyses given below.

4. The Structure of Tragedy. — The structure of the tragedy may be conveniently represented by the accompanying diagram: —



Let the line *A* represent the introduction, called also the *prologos*, or *protasis*. Let *B* and *C* represent the action proper, consisting of its two parts; *B*, the rise, also called the *complication*, and *C*, the fall, also called the *revolution* or *reversal*. *D* represents the conclusion.

Besides these lines we find three important points in the diagram: *a*, the starting point; *b*, the turning point, or *peripeteia*; *c*, the terminal point, or crisis.

We shall now consider these details in turn.

(1) *The Introduction.* — This does not begin the action or movement of the play, properly so called. Its purpose is to put the spectator in possession of the necessary preliminaries. These are the situation out of which the action arises, the exciting force which starts the struggle, and the chief personages with an adumbration of their traits of character.

The difficulty that confronts the writer in composing the introduction is to bring forward these preliminaries concisely, yet clearly; not, however, in the form of a monologue or confidential address to the spectators, but by a natural dialogue between the actors, without any appearance of exposition.

In the introduction or prologos of "Hecuba," which extends to the entrance of the chorus, the long monologue of Polydorus is a defect, delaying the action and marring the dramatic effect. On the other hand, the situation with its two parts is given in the narrative of Polydorus, which is skilfully concise; we are told of the fate of Polydorus, of the impending fate of Polyxena; the exciting force may be seen in the omens and the visions that haunt the mind of Hecuba and set in motion the grief, not untinctured with venom, that creates the struggle in the play. Of the characters, Hecuba only is introduced.

(2) *The Rise of the Action.* — This brings the chief personage through a series of incidents leading to a point where a change in his fortune begins to manifest itself. The word "rise," technically used to designate this portion of the action, is misleading. It does not aptly characterize what it is meant to convey. In "Macbeth," the hero does in a sense "rise"; he overcomes his scruples, he murders Duncan, he puts out of the way his rival, Banquo; his efforts are crowned with success. In "King Lear," on the other hand, the first half of the action might more fittingly be described as a "fall." The old king is spurned by Goneril, is cast out of doors by both daughters, battles with the elements, and loses his wits before the turn in the tide of his struggle. But in either case there comes a point near the middle of the play where such a change occurs, and the first half of the action thus stands in contrast with the second. This first half is technically the "*rise*" of the action. In the succession of incidents that compose it there must be a well-marked climax. The story does not proceed along a level, but, as indicated by the direction of the line in the diagram, grows in emotional impressiveness and brings the hero steadily nearer to the ultimate point of his success or downfall.

(3) *The Reversal of the Action.* — This half of the action

conducts us through a series of events standing in contrast with the preceding, — representing a change in the hero's fortunes. If in the rise of the action the hero trod the road of success, now he treads the road of failure; if in the rise he met with calamity, in the reversal he recovers from his misfortunes.

Experience proves that this is the most difficult part of the play to handle with success. The difficulty is to invent incidents that will keep up the movement in a steady direction towards the end, and sustain the interest aroused in the spectators by the first half of the action; and the danger is that the hero be lost sight of by the poet in developing the antagonistic forces.

A weakness in the structure of the reversal is particularly noticeable in "King Lear"; the old king is almost relegated to the background as the plot thickens about Edmund and his sisters.

(4) *The Conclusion.* — The action proper is now at an end. The catastrophe has transpired. This part of the tragedy presents the consequences that follow the action — the rounding off of the play necessary to its end. Like the conclusion of the epic, it must be short and decisive.[1]

(5) *Three Points in the Action.* — In addition to these four parts of the tragedy there are, as has been noted, three points of such importance as to require special attention. The first of these is the "starting point," which follows the introduction. The situation has been laid down, the chief characters have been introduced, the forces of the drama have been put in line, and now the struggle whatever its nature begins. This is the starting point, and it must be well marked, unmistakable in import, without any vagueness or uncertainty as to the direction in which the hero begins to move.

[1] For illustrations of all these points, see the analyses given at the end of this chapter.

Thus the starting point in the "Œdipus Tyrannus" is the proclamation by which the king starts on his quest for the murderer. It is a strong, earnest, confident denunciation of the crime.

The second is the "turning point" between the two halves of the action proper, also called the peripeteia. The exact occurrence at which this change becomes discernible must from the nature of the case be insignificant, as the hero cannot plunge abruptly from success to failure, or the reverse. Yet it is at the same time important that the change be promptly and clearly recorded in some memorable and impressive scene, one that shows vividly the significance of the change.

The turning point in the career of Macbeth is the escape of Fleance from the sword of the assassins, — Macbeth's first failure. This is made known quietly in the banquet scene, and the hero's turn from triumph to discomfiture is instantly recorded in the vision of Banquo and the breaking up of the feast.

The third point is the crisis, where the action proper terminates, the final issue of the long struggle, the catastrophe that overtakes those involved in it. This should be the emotional climax of the play, and hence must needs be developed at length; must be momentous in its import, and imposing or intense in its delineation, so as plainly to transcend all other parts of the play in the impression it leaves upon the mind.

Here arises the question whether an action properly tragic, after conducting the primary person through calamity, may end in his triumph, and thus involve the adversary alone in final ruin. Aristotle indeed gives to such a plot the qualified sanction of "toleration." This termination, he says, is more appropriate to comedy, and has nothing better to justify it than a questionable concession to the sympathies of the spectators. In our own day we

should hardly apply the term "tragedy" at all to a plot which leads the hero, through whatever difficulties, to eventual prosperity and the achievement of his desires.

Hecuba is an instance of a play with a so-called "double" termination. Polymestor, the antagonist, is alone involved in ultimate disaster; Hecuba, after all her sufferings, meets the untragic end in which her revenge is gratified to the last detail, although the poet endeavors to make some slight amends for this by casting over her, before the termination of the play, the shadow of an evil prophecy.[1]

Ancient Greek Tragedy

The tragedy of the ancient Greeks is in many respects different from our own.

(1) The first quality that strikes the reader is its extreme simplicity. To achieve this simplicity was the one great aim of the Greek dramatist. The romantic drama is often compared to a painter's canvas, crowded with characters, representing an intricate situation, retreating into a deep background and showing contrasts of light and shade; the Greek tragedy rather resembles a piece of sculpture, simple in design, majestic in outline, and perfect in proportions. This comparison gives a perfect idea of the form and spirit of the productions of the Greek stage. Consequently we make a mistake to seek in Sophocles for all the qualities we find in Shakespeare. If we are to appreciate ancient tragedy we must judge it from the standpoint of statuesque simplicity; we are not to look for the intricate plot, highly colored imagery, detailed elaboration of the Elizabethan plays.

(2) This simplicity shows itself in various ways. First, the unity is more compact. There is a "unity of time"

[1] On Tragedy in general see Freytag's "Technique of the Drama," translated by MacEwan.

which forbids the action to occupy more than a single day, and a "unity of place" which requires the scene to remain unchanged throughout the play. These two unities are unknown to the English stage, but, with only a few exceptions, were observed by the Greeks. But even the unity of action itself is more rigidly adhered to. Thus, double actions, so prevalent in Shakespeare, have no place in Greek tragedy; subsidiary details that serve for mere purposes of contrast or heightening, such as the stocking of Kent in "King Lear" (see analysis below), are few and brief; intricate situations are avoided, as, for instance, the rivalry of Goneril and Regan for the hand of Edmund in the third act of the same play. The action of a Greek play has the unity that belongs to a stately column, the action of a romantic tragedy the unity of a luxuriant oak tree.

(3) Greek simplicity is to be seen also in the characters. They are comparatively few in number; no more than three speaking characters may occupy the stage at the same time. Still more simple is their delineation. Shakespeare puts before us many-sided, often highly complex, personalities, and draws them minutely and with full detail. See, for instance, how ineffectual is the critic's attempt to analyze Hamlet or Macbeth. Sophocles, too, shows indeed the master hand; his characters are not vague, shadowy, indistinct; but he sketches in bold outline, he is not penetrating, not minute; in depicting even his prominent persons he selects hardly more than two or three traits — such as serve the requirements of his fable, or such as are required for purposes of contrast, and he confines himself to the exhibition of these.

(4) The internal structure of the Greek play follows the general model described above.[1] But its external divisions are more formal. It is divided into the following distinct

[1] See p. 112.

parts: first the *prologos*, which is commensurate with the introduction of the action, described above; then follow several *epeisodia*, each containing a distinct phase of the action proper; finally the *exodos*, which embraces the conclusion after the climax. These parts are kept separated one from another by four or more choral odes, called respectively the *parodos*, or entrance song, and the first, second, third *stasima*. They are sung between the several acts or parts by a chorus of fifteen appropriate characters, who occupy the center of the theater below the stage and accompany their chant by some form of measured dance. This chorus, speaking through their leader, the *coryphæos*, often holds a brief dialogue with the persons on the stage. The subject of the choral odes is suggested by what has just been enacted on the stage. Their artistic value lies in this, that the emotion awakened in the audience by the scene just witnessed is sustained and emphasized by the singing, and the actors returning to the stage do not find a lagging and distracted audience whose interest must be enkindled anew.

Œdipus, in the play, rushes from the stage after his appalling discovery, with the piercing words,

"Oh light of day! Now for the last time may I gaze upon thee — I, who have been found accursed in birth, accursed in wedlock, accursed in the shedding of blood."

One can readily recognize the power of a strain of music instantly taken up by the lyric cry of the chorus, —

"Oh ye race of men, how do I account your life as nothing! Where, where, is the mortal who wins more of happiness than the semblance thereof, and after the semblance a passing away. Thine is a fate that warns me, thine, thine, unhappy Œdipus, to call no creature blest."

(5) The treatment of the action also differs from that of modern plays. First, our drama depends largely upon the

element of surprise; that is, the issue is studiously concealed from the audience; their curiosity is thus excited, and when the catastrophe is revealed, the play is brought rapidly to an end. On the other hand, the Greek poet prefers to let the spectators into the secret from the beginning. He shows them the victim advancing unconsciously toward the precipice over which he is to plunge. The intense pathos of such a spectacle would only be weakened by the feeling of curiosity as to his fate. Hence the importance in ancient tragedy of what is known as the *anagnorisis* or "recognition," by which the unconscious subject awakes at last to the knowledge of his position.

Secondly, the Greek tragedy almost invariably ends in repose. After the excitement of the climax, a passage follows which moderates the emotions and leads to concluding lines breathing serenity and tranquil submission to fate.

(6) Finally, Greek tragedy is invested with a distinctly religious character. Originating in dithyrambic odes in honor of the god Dionysus, it continued, even after it passed into the dramatic stage, to move in a religious atmosphere. The central conception in most of the plays is that of fate or destiny wielded by divine power over the life of man, and continual reference is made to the deities both in the lyrical and dialogue parts. Hence it is that Greek tragedy is highly ethical in tone and purpose. Yet its moral utterances are never cold abstractions, never uninspired. "It is only in the greatest tragedies of Shakespeare, such as Hamlet and Macbeth, that we meet with anything like an equal combination of dramatic power and profound moral significance."[1]

The preceding details are illustrated in brief, in the following analysis: —

[1] See Haigh, "The Tragic Drama of the Greeks," where this whole subject is admirably treated.

ANALYSIS OF THE ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS

a. The Plague in Thebes *b.* The Answer of the Oracle	**Prologos of the Action.**
Lament over the Plague	**Parodos of the Chorus.**
c. The Proclamation of Œdipus *d.* Creon's Suggestion *e.* The Interview with Teiresias	**First Epeisodion.**
Horror for the Murderer; loyalty to Œdipus	**First Stasimon.**
f. The Quarrel with Creon *g.* The Intervention of Jocasta *h.* Her Reassurances *i.* The Suspicion of Œdipus that He is the Murderer *j.* The Summoning of the Herdsman	**Second Epeisodion.**
Prayer against Impiety and Arrogance	**Second Stasimon.**
x. The Coming of the Corinthian *y.* The Partial Revelation of Œdipus's Parentage *z.* The Horror of Jocasta on learning the Whole Truth	**Third Epeisodion.**
Joyous Predictions concerning Œdipus	**Third Stasimon.**
k. The Interview between the Corinthian and the Herdsman *l.* The Complete Discovery	**Fourth Epeisodion.**
Lamentation over the Fall of Œdipus	**Fourth Stasimon.**
m. The Death of Jocasta and the Self-Inflicted Blindness of Œdipus *n.* The Exhibition of the Fallen Œdipus	**Exodos.**

(1) The appropriateness of the choral odes does not appear from this brief sketch, but is obvious to any one reading the play.

(2) The marginal letters indicate the causal nexus between the incidents; thus, the plague gives rise to the oracle,

the oracle causes the proclamation, and Creon's suggestion, and so forth. It will be seen that no incident arises from causes outside the action, except the coming of the Corinthian.

(3) The action is concerned with "the search for the murderer of Laius." This formulates its unity. It begins with the institution of the search, and ends with the discovery.

(4) The prologos or introduction is prefatory; it presents the situation out of which the action arises, viz., the plague; it indicates the exciting force, viz., the oracle; and it introduces Œdipus as the benignant king, at the same time hinting at that impetuosity of character which involves him in misfortune.

(5) The action proper, viz., "the search" — contains two distinct and contrasted phases; in the first half, Œdipus is on the wrong clew, and grows more and more self-confident. This brings us as far as the middle of the second epeisodion. In the second half, he starts on the right clew, and grows more and more alarmed. The turning point occurs when the suspicion first dawns on Œdipus that he is the guilty person, about line 726.

(6) The exodos, or conclusion, follows after the action, *i.e.* after the *search* is ended, and represents the consequences or aftermath.

(7) The three conspicuous points in the action are impressive; the starting point, — the stern denunciation of the murder; the turning point, — the unmistakable misgivings of Œdipus in lines 726–770; the climax, — the passionate despair of Œdipus as he rushes from the scene after the discovery. This and not the following is the climax of the play; the scenes described by the messenger are properly a descent in intensity from the terrors of the fourth epeisodion.

(8) We may note three places where the action pauses, or

is retarded for the sake of emphasizing the impression. The first of these is the denunciation, — to heighten the malice of the crime; secondly, the quarrel, — to display the suspicious phase of Œdipus' character; third, the whole of the third epeisodion, — to serve as a pause on the brink of the precipice.

ANALYSIS OF KING LEAR

The following sketch exhibits in parallel columns the essential steps in the two actions: —

1. King Lear divides his kingdom — Cordelia left dowerless.	1. Edmund lays his plans and takes the first steps in the deception of Gloucester.
2. Lear spurned by Goneril.	2. The deception reinforced — Edgar takes to flight.
3. Lear cast off by both daughters.	
4. Lear battling with the storm.	3. Edmund and Cornwall conspire against Gloucester.
5. Lear, mad, is succored by Gloucester and others.	4. Gloucester blinded and cast out as a partisan of Lear's.
6. Lear on the way to recovery, "matter and impertinency mixed."	5. Gloucester cared for by Edgar, and saved from assassination and suicide.
7. Lear restored and in the arms of Cordelia.	
Goneril and Regan rivals for the hand of Edmund.	
8. Death of Lear and Cordelia, of Goneril, Regan, Edmund, and others.	

1. In this bare outline we may see the essential stages of the two plots; in the main plot (1) represents the introduction; (2), (3), (4), (5), represent the first half of the action, with the turning point; (6) and (7) the second half; (8) the conclusion. The development of the sub-plot advances *pari passu* with the main plot: thus (1) indicates the introduction and beginning of the action; (2), (3), (4), the first half, to the turning point; (5) the restoration of Gloucester, after which he disappears from view.

2. The relation between the two plots forms another point of interest. Gloucester's sympathy for Lear is the first trace of connection between them; then Edmund leagues with Cornwall against Lear and Gloucester, which draws the two actions into closer relationship; in the fourth act the intrigues of Goneril and Regan for the hand of Edmund complete the unification. Gloucester is dropped from sight, and in the conclusion all the forces of the play are centred about the person of Lear himself. It may be noticed that, in the second half, the action both of the main plot and sub-plot halt, and fails to match the activities of the first half. The incidents centre about Edmund and the two sisters, rather than about the chief characters. A similar weakness of construction is to be found in "Macbeth."

3. The outline of either of these actions in "King Lear" would form abundant material for more than one Greek tragedy. Shakespeare not only uses both plots together, but interweaves many subsidiary incidents and details not alluded to above. These serve to prepare and intensify the chief incident about which they centre. Thus, in Act I, Sc. 4, first Kent is introduced in disguise, thus serving by his fidelity as a foil to the sisters; then follows the episode with Oswald, to prepare us by Lear's outburst here for his wrath that is to come; thirdly, the Fool appears and brings

before the King's mind the ignominy of his condition; and it is only after all this that the chief incident occurs, viz., Lear's rejection by Goneril.

Comedy

1. Definition. — Comedy proper is that species of dramatic composition which humorously satirizes human character.

Hence we distinguish comedy proper from what is sometimes termed "Romantic Comedy," in which the comic element is subordinated to a plot of serious character, ending not tragically but happily. To this class belong most of Shakespeare's comedies, such as "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona."

Comedy proper is also to be distinguished from such plots as possess no character significance, and are hardly more than a tissue of farcical situations arising from purely accidental circumstances. A typical instance is "The Comedy of Errors." Such plots, at least in their general conception, have no strictly poetical value.

2. The End of Comedy. — The end of comedy proper is to amuse; but its significance as poetry lies in the fact that its amusement is concerned with the defects or incongruities of human character, and hence it too in its measure is a "criticism of life."[1]

3. Sources of Humor. — The comic effect may originate from two sources. First, from the characters themselves; the traits they exhibit may be so incongruous and surprising as to be ludicrous independently of the course of events which arise. Secondly, the comic effect may originate from the unexpected situations in which they involve themselves. In every well-handled comedy, both of these sources will be found; one hardly exists without the other.

[1] See "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art," Chap. X.

Thus in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" we find a highly complicated intrigue made up of two plots: first, Falstaff's advances to the two "Merry Wives," bringing upon his head repeated misadventures; and secondly, the advances of Dr. Caius, Slender, and young Fenton to Anne Page, involving the burlesque duel. A series of ludicrous situations is constantly passing. Besides this, the character of the amorous, avaricious, and dense-witted Falstaff is in itself ludicrous; also the foolish doctor who takes himself so seriously, the imbecile Slender, and the meddling Welsh priest. Against these are set the characters of the two staunchly faithful but humorous "Wives," the amiable Anne, and the romantic Fenton; and, balancing each other in the two actions, the mischief-loving innkeeper, and Dame Quickly.

4. The Treatment of the Action. — Of the unity and structure of the comic plot, little is to be said. In general they follow the principles laid down for tragedy, but with rather more latitude than is conceded to the latter. For the unity of idea is not always so clearly defined as in tragedy, nor the rise and fall of the action so nicely balanced either in length or in emphasis.

Two important differences between tragic and comic treatment must be noted. First: in comedy the emotions must be treated lightly and superficially. Depth of feeling, intensity of emotion, strong passion of whatever kind, whether of the lover or the villain, are incompatible with the ludicrous. Humor resides on the surface of things. If we pass beyond the surface, we light upon that graver import, which belongs indeed to all life, to all reality, but which can only be dimly suggested, if touched at all, in comedy.

This is observed even in the Romantic Comedy; the love of Silvia and Valentine must of necessity be more superficial, or at least treated with less emphasis, than the love of Romeo and Juliet. And in "The Two Captives" of Plautus, the heavy retribution which falls upon the runaway slave at the end of the play is passed off with a jest by the slave himself.

Secondly, the law of tragic action, that each successive incident should be linked by causality with the preceding and should result in great measure from the struggle of the primary personage, cannot be maintained in the comic plot. Here, much must of necessity be the result of chance, or of some scheme artfully concocted by the characters, rather than the working out of inevitable law. This proceeds from the very nature of comic action. The humor depends very largely upon the suddenness of what occurs. What proceeds from the operation of natural causes observed by us can rarely surprise us when it actually comes to pass; when we observe the trend of events towards a goal, the goal will hardly be unexpected when reached. Consequently comic plot must frequently throw before us incidents which are unprepared and uncaused, or whose causes are hidden from our eyes. And as a further extension of this liberty, comic episodes may be introduced that are quite superfluous to the working out of the plot.

In "The Two Captives," the character of the parasite, though a prominent feature of the play from prologue to epilogue, is merely a by-part, without influence on the turn of events; and the two cardinal incidents of the play come about by chance, for one of the two captives purchased by Hegio turns out to be his son, and his guest Aristophontes *happens* to be an intimate friend of Philocrates, and so is able to unmask Tyndarus.

Ancient Classic Comedy

The comedy of the ancient Greeks falls into two groups, each with characteristics of its own. They are designated as "Old Comedy" and "New Comedy." Of the latter no examples survive, but the tradition is preserved in the comedy of the Romans, who are supposed to have followed closely these later Greek models. The "New Comedy," therefore, is represented by the plays of Plautus and Terence.

1. Old Comedy. — The old comedy of the Greeks originated from a gradual blending of two ingredients, the kômos, a wandering dance through the countryside accompanied with wild reveling and, the natural element in all comedy, satire. Consequently, the comic effect as we find it in the plays of Aristophanes is reducible to two features corresponding to the above; namely, an extravagant fancy, and a satiric comment (often of a political or literary character) conveyed through the medium of the extravaganza.

Thus in "The Birds" two old Athenians visit the kingdom of the birds, and eventually it is agreed by both birds and men to build Cloud-Cuckoo Town midway between heaven and earth. This is the extravaganza. They are weary of the wranglings and contentions at Athens and the exactions of the gods. This forms the basis of the satire.

The structure is built along the general lines of tragedy, but possesses greater freedom of form. Thus we have the *prologos* or introduction, which explains the origin of the extravagant plot and is often very long; then the development of the plot in a series of *epeisodia;* and finally the outcome, or *exodos*, generally accompanied with spectacular effects, such as a bridal ceremony or a torchlight procession. As in tragedy, there is a chorus which sings its odes in the intervals between the several scenes. Sometimes we find one or more subsidiary choruses, as in the "Frogs," in which the well-known "*coax, coax*" chant is heard from the stage wings.

The "Frogs" opens with the adventures of Bacchus and his slave, who are preparing to descend into Hades in order to bring back to Athens the deceased poet Euripides. This is the introduction. After the choral song of the frogs there follow a series of comic incidents in Hades, chief of which is the contest for supremacy between the tragic poets, Æschylus and Euripides. This is the development, containing the extravagant idea of a visit to Hades and not a little venomous satire on the tragedies

of Euripides. In the exodos, Bacchus, having adjudged Æschylus to be the better poet, carries him off to earth accompanied by a sacred procession of torches.

The most striking peculiarity of the Old Comedy is the *parabasis.* This is a sort of lyric interlude in which the chorus turns from the stage and addresses the spectators, giving up, for the time, their dramatic connection with the play. It is made up of five distinct parts.

(*a*) The *parabasis proper,* an open, undisguised satire of a political or social nature, written in anapests.

(*b*) A lyric *strophe* invoking some deity, or parodying a choral ode of tragedy.

(*c*) An *epirrhema,* treating of some patriotic or political theme, written in trochaic measure.

(*d*) An *antistrophe,* continuing the strophe.

(*e*) An *antepirrhema,* continuing the epirrhema.

In the "Clouds" the parabasis proper is a humorous exaltation of the writer of the comedy (who speaks to the audience in the first person) over his rivals; the strophe contains an invocation of Zeus and Æther in mock imitation of Sophocles's "Teucer"; the epirrhema introduces a description of an Athenian election supposed to be an offense against the Clouds; the antistrophe is a parody on the dithyrambic poets; the antepirrhema continues the subject of the epirrhema.

The parabasis forms the chief external difference between Greek tragedy and the Old Comedy. Minor points are the following: that the choral odes are frequently very short, — lyrical lines are freely introduced to break the monotony of long *epeisodia,* — forensic contests are interrupted by anapests, — the chorus, before its first appearance, is generally summoned or introduced by characters on the stage.

2. The New (Roman) Comedy. — This differs in essential features from the preceding.

(*a*) The extravagant fancy entirely disappears, and the

interest depends, not on the wildness of the absurdity, but on the very opposite, the probability, truth, and naturalness with which the action is worked out; in a word, we find here the interest that attaches to human beings like ourselves placed in ridiculous but intelligible situations. The satiric element, too, has a less conspicuous place; it is not commonly the direct satire of Aristophanes; but rather it underlies the plot, which for this purpose is usually a caricature of some social type, as the disappointed lover, the runaway slave, the parasite.

(*b*) The structural parts are as usual; the introduction, the development (which, in this species of poetry, involves the characters in some complication or perplexity), and the conclusion, which unravels the situation or clears up the difficulty. In addition to the essential plot, it is not unusual to introduce a by-character, such as the parasite in the "Two Captives" of Plautus, the hilarious slave in the "Stichus" of Plautus, the scheming slave in the "Phormio" of Terence. These are not essential to the plot and merely serve the purpose of furnishing a supply of comic incidents of their own.

A favorite method of complication is to involve the characters in some error which is cleared up at the end. In the "Mostellaria" of Plautus the father of a family, amazed to hear the sound of revelry issuing from his house, is deterred from entering by a slave, who assures him that the place is infested by evil spirits. This deception leads the slave into embarrassing difficulties, and at last his story collapses and the master comes into his own. The "Menæchmi" is founded on a case of mistaken identity like Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors."

In conclusion we may point out several points of difference in the external features of the Old and the New Comedy. First, the chorus has entirely disappeared. In its place we find that the dialogue rises occasionally from iambic

or anapestic to strictly lyrical metres, to give expression to passages of exceptional emotional significance. Secondly, the *prologos* is not an introductory scene of the drama, but a prefatory speech outside the play, addressed to the audience and containing a sketch of the action. Hence it is equivalent to the modern prologue. An epilogue is recited after the action is finished, asking the spectators to give their applause. Thirdly, with the disappearance of the chorus, disappears the formal division into *epeisodia* of the Old Comedy and Tragedy. In their place we have the beginning of the acts and scenes of our time, but with a difference of meaning. A new *scene* is numbered as often as a character enters or leaves the stage; an *act* is completed when all the characters retire, leaving the stage temporarily vacant.[1]

EXERCISES

1. Sketch in outline the plot of the tragedy of Macbeth, showing the introduction, the rise and fall of the action with the several stages of each, the turning point, the catastrophe, the conclusion.

2. Show how the character of Macbeth is so drawn as to be a fit subject for tragic action, *i.e.* to exhibit a soul-struggle against contending forces.

3. The "Hecuba" of Euripides betrays many defects of construction; point out the following:—

(*a*) Why there is want of unity in the plot.

(*b*) What is defective in the prologos, or introduction.

(*c*) Why Hecuba in the second half of the play is not suitable as a primary personage.

(*d*) Show to what extent the choral odes fail in appropriateness.

(*e*) In the first stasimon, show how the imagery, in spite of its beauty, is not suggestive of the emotion to be conveyed.

4. Write an essay discussing the manner in which Shakespeare has handled the story of Macbeth, as found in Holinshed's Chron-

[1] On Comedy see Moulton, "The Ancient Classical Drama."

icle,[1] in order to suit it to a tragedy, — noting in particular the following heads: —

(*a*) His selection of material for the chief incidents of his plot.

(*b*) His condensation of material for the sake of climax.

(*c*) His invention of new material not found in the Chronicle.

(*d*) His invention of details in the character of Macbeth.

5. Sketch briefly, and in order, the chief incidents in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," showing the double plot, the introduction, climax, and conclusion of each.

[1] The relation of Holinshed is to be found in Rolfe's edition of the tragedy, pp. 136 ff.

CHAPTER III

Lyric Poetry

1. Definition. — The Lyric is that form of poetry in which the primary and direct object is to express the personal emotion or emotional conceptions of the writer.

In this definition note: —

First, that what is expressed in lyric poetry is *personal to the writer*. This distinguishes lyric from dramatic poetry, in which the poet speaks not in his own person at all, but in the person of his characters.

Secondly, that the material which the poet lyricizes is emotion and strictly emotional thought. Here it may be objected that narrative poetry too expresses the emotion of the writer, and hence would not be distinguished from lyric poetry by the definition given above. In answer to this, note,

Thirdly, that to express personal emotion is the *direct* and *primary* object of the lyric. These words are meant to distinguish the attitude of the narrative poet from that of the lyricist. The formal object of all poetry, as we have seen, is to express emotion; now the strictly narrative poet fixes his attention on the emotion contained in the story which he is telling, the lyric poet on the emotion contained in his own breast. In other words, the narrator does not profess to set forth, primarily and directly, what he himself thinks or feels in a personal way about the narrative. If he is a good story-teller, he forgets himself entirely and is absorbed in what he is narrating, — in its emotional char-

acter, if he is a poet,— in other features, if he is a prose narrator. The lyric poet takes precisely the opposite attitude; what he tells us is primarily and directly what he himself thinks and feels, his musings, his meditations, his aspirations, his ravings.

Sometimes indeed the lyric poet uses a narrative as the basis of his lyric, as in the ballad, and then the difference between himself and the narrator becomes apparent. The latter literally *tells* the story (always, of course, in poetry, for its emotional value); the lyric poet does not *tell* the tale, but sings about it. It is as if his audience knew the story beforehand, and so he can touch the facts themselves lightly, off-hand, and indirectly, and, in unison with his hearers, can mourn, or rejoice, or ponder over the facts; that is, in a word, the lyric poet expresses what he himself feels about the narrative.

A poem with such a narrative basis, yet strictly lyrical in treatment, is "Lord Ullin's Daughter" (Golden Treasury, CCXXV). In this example the lyric character is manifest; in many other poems the subjective and objective elements are so nearly equal as to make it impossible to class them decisively as narratives or as lyrics; and in the midst of a narrative poem, even of a strict epic, we may find short passages approaching the lyric attitude, though retaining the epic form.[1]

2. Classification. — Lyric poetry may be classified according to various principles: —

(1) According to intensity of emotion, as the passionate and the quiet. Such a classification has little significance, but we may cite "The Bard," and the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," as representing respectively these degrees of emotion.

(2) According to subject matter, as amatory, political, religious, moral, and nature lyrics. This division is perhaps

[1] See p. 95.

still less serviceable, and is necessarily inadequate, since the subject-matter of the lyric is inexhaustible.

(3) According to metrical scheme, as regular, irregular, and antistrophic. In every lyric the metre must be in perfect accord with the spirit and sentiment expressed, but this principle has special application to the irregular ode. The variation of the metre must never be an arbitrary arrangement, but must rise and sink as the sentiment rises and sinks, so that it falls upon the ear as the inevitable metrical echo of the thought.[1] Examples of irregular odes are Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," Milton's "Lycidas," and Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality."

The antistrophic ode contains two sections modeled on the same metrical plan, called strophe and antistrophe, followed by a concluding section on a different but related plan, called the epode. The purpose of this scheme is to leave one complete musical impression, consisting of a call, its answer, and an echo (strophe, antistrophe, and epode). It was used effectively in the choral poetry of the Greeks, but when, as in English, a poem is recited without music, the effect of so intricate an arrangement is obscured or entirely lost. Examples of the antistrophic ode are Gray's "Bard" and "Progress of Poesy."

(4) Perhaps a more natural division of lyric poetry is to be derived from the essential poetical elements that predominate. In this way we should class them as the "*reflective*," in which the intellectual or thought element is conspicuous, as in many of Wordsworth's poems; the "*imaginative*," in which narration or description is the basis, as in Keats's "Ode to Autumn"; the "*emotional*," in which the feeling dominates and colors all else, as in Shelley's "Skylark" and "West Wind."

[1] See Corson, "Primer of English Verse," Chap. III; also Watts in Encyclopædia Britannica, "Poetry," ad finem.

(5) Finally, we have a recognized terminology, classing lyric poems as simple lyrics, odes, elegies, ballads, and songs.

(*a*) *The Ode and the Lyric.* — The use of these terms is not accurately fixed. It is more usual to designate as an ode a poem that is more dignified or exalted in thought and style; as a lyric, one that is more simple, light, and brief.

(*b*) *The Elegy.* — The elegy has two distinctive features; first, it is a poem of lamentation, especially commemorative of the dead; secondly, it is quiet and meditative in tone rather than passionate and exalted. From the nature of its subject the elegy is apt to be more immediately personal in its sentiments than other styles of poetry; it is a species of confidence between writer and reader in which the poet makes confession of a sorrow that is particularly his own.[1] The best known elegies in English are Gray's "Elegy," Milton's "Lycidas" in memory of Edward King, Shelley's "Adonais" for Keats, Arnold's "Thyrsis" for Arthur Hugh Clough, and Tennyson's chain of elegies, "In Memoriam" of Arthur Hallam.

(*c*) *The Song.* — This is a short lyric adapted for singing. Painstaking smoothness of finish must be joined to spontaneity of sentiment, and both kept above the plane of weak, commonplace sentimentality, and in the region of true poetry. The chief requirements may be named as follows: first, directness, simplicity, and spontaneity of thought; secondly, simplicity of grammatical structure; thirdly, correspondence between word-phrasing and the phrasing of the music to which the words are set; fourthly, an arrangement of vowel and consonant sounds that will give special ease and grace to the movement itself and will also be adapted

[1] In classical poetry the term "elegy" is sometimes applied to all longer poems written in alternate hexameters and pentameters, whatever their theme.

to the singing voice, closed vowel sounds and the guttural and sibilant consonants being least desirable.

Of the many songs to be found in the Golden Treasury the following may be specified; Nos. XI, LVI, CXVI, CXXIX, CLXVII, CLXXVI, CXVIII. See also the songs placed at the end of the several cantos of Tennyson's "Princess."

(*d*) *The Ballad.* — This is primarily a folk-song, — a song originating among the people in early times. The subject-matter is commonly a narrative concerning the adventures of a hero, as Robin Hood, or legend of weird or pathetic character, as "The Twa Corbies," but told always in a distinctly lyrical manner. Sometimes indeed the ballad is a pure lyric without narrative, as "The Lyke-Wake Dirge."

In style and versification these ballads are often rude to the point of offense. But the tone of the best ballads is always earnest, frequently intensely serious, with a straightforwardness of expression that passes into brusqueness. These qualities joined now to a certain dramatic suggestiveness in the manner of narrating, now to a romantic adventurousness in the incidents, now to a genuine pathos in the utterance, constitute the poetic value of the ballad.

Some of the external features of the old ballads are the following: —

(1) Certain set epithets and formulas recurring again and again, as,

> They hadna been a week, a week
> In Noroway, but twae —
>
> They hadna sailed a league, a league,
> A league, but barely three —
>
> They hadna gone a step, a step,
> A step, but barely one —

(2) Repetitions of lines in nearly identical form, especially in the speeches of the characters, as,

"Oh, where will I get a gude sailor
To take my helm in hand,
Till I get up to the tall topmast
To see if I can spy land."

"Oh, here am I, a sailor gude,
To take the helm in hand,
Till you go up to the tall top-mast,
But I fear you'll ne'er spy land."

— "Sir Patrick Spens."

(3) A certain abruptness in the telling of the story: the characters often break into speech without warning, and one incident is thrown on top of another, leaving the interval entirely to the reader's imagination; thus: —

The King sits in Dunferline town
Drinking the blud-red wine;
"Oh, whare will I get a seely skipper,
To sail this new ship of mine."

(4) In metre a preference for the quatrain with alternate lines of four and three accents.[1]

3. General Characteristics of Lyric Poetry. — Perhaps the qualities that we chiefly look for in the lyric are the following:

(1) *Sincerity.* — The lyric may be grave or gay, subdued or passionate, but the emotion, whatever it be, must be genuine, not manufactured, must proceed from the heart of the poet, not from his lips only. Nothing can be more offensive than to make figures of speech a substitute for real feeling, and to serve up exclamations, apostrophes, and the like, without the warmth of sentiment that alone can make such modes of expression tolerable. When these faults occur, it is not hard

[1] For examples of primitive ballad poetry, see Ward's "English Poets," Vol. I, also "A Book of Old English Ballads" by George Wharton Edwards.

for any one with the least power of discrimination to detect the want of sincerity.

But literary sincerity goes farther than this. It requires, and does actually produce, in the best poetry, a perfect equivalence between the sentiment that the poet feels and his images, his diction, and the rhythmical movement of his verse. The reader appreciates that here there is no exaggeration, no overdrawn emphasis, no straining after an intensity that is not felt, and, on the other hand, no ineffectual lapses into mere prose and unemotional expression, but an exact revelation of what is in the poet's heart. To recognize this sincerity and to detect the want of it is not always possible after the first reading of a poem, nor can it be learned by rule or precept. The ear and the mind must be diligently attuned to what is genuine in order to discriminate it surely from what is false. There are doubtless those to whom street songs make more appeal than the songs of Herrick or Burns. It is only by familiarizing ourselves intimately with true poetry, and afterwards by testing this along with what is less true, that we attain to some sureness in passing judgment.

Sincerity is not to be confounded with intensity. Any degree of emotion, however tranquil, or however light and airy, may be sincerely expressed. The lyric is said to be insincere when the poet tries to manufacture by means of figurative language an emotion that he does not feel.

Compare the following: Golden Treasury, I, is sincere and simple; XI, sincere and playful; CXXIX, sincere and frivolous; XXXIX, sincere and intense. Golden Treasury, CCLXIX, is meditative, but here, in contrast with the preceding, the sincerity is not quite convincing: "slumber's chain," and "leaves in Wintry weather" are rather artificial and conventional, and the "banquet-hall" too superficial an image of life in such a context.

The following stanza is utterly insincere; the lines are cold and uninspired, while the writer makes an effort to seem intense.

Sensibility how charming
Thou, my friend, can truly tell,
But distress with horrors arming
Thou hast also known too well.

— BURNS, "Sensibility."

(2) *Universality.* — The second quality of the lyric is universality. The sentiment expressed, though it is indeed the personal sentiment of the poet, must not be based on what is exceptional or peculiar to the poet. Suppose, for instance, that Mozart had described in lyric verse the ravishing delight in musical sound felt by him as a child; it would indeed be interesting as biography, but not valuable as poetry, because the experience is unnatural and exceptional. So too, purely personal occasions of sorrow or rejoicing, if they stir the poet into song, must carry him beyond the merely personal and suggest conceptions that the reader may make his own.

Milton's sonnet "On His Blindness," Golden Treasury, XCIV, illustrates very well how a personal emotion may be universalized. It is not a querulous or self-centred complaint; the reflections rise above self, and take a broad view of man's relations to God. We may compare with Milton's sonnet the following lines from Swift, in which the narrowly personal attitude savors of egotism and is unpoetic.

My state of health none cares to learn;
My life is here no soul's concern.
And those with whom I here converse
Without a tear will tend my hearse.

* * * * * *

But no obliging tender friend
To help at my approaching end, —
My life is now a burden grown
To others, ere it be my own.

— "In Sickness."

(3) *Concentration.* — By this quality we mean the opposite of diffuseness. Keen emotion focuses the mental faculties

and increases their energy. Hence the lyric poet is cautious to give no place to irrelevant detail, to eliminate long descriptions and indeed every phrase that does not contribute to the emotion that he expresses, or that betrays a wandering of his mind from the inspiration of the poem. Further, he does not spread out his thought by amplification, as the rhetorician may do, but flashes out image after image, turning from thought to thought, attacking his subject from this side and that, without pausing to reiterate or explain or enlarge upon his view.

The intense lyrics will naturally be more concentrated than those of a quieter character. Nothing, perhaps, except the best passages of Shakespeare, can surpass the concentration of Shelley's "West Wind." Yet, even Wordsworth's "Daisy" has the degree of concentration suited to the mood of the poem, which muses rather than raves.

Byron is the chief offender against concentration; he has the rhetorician's instinct for amplification, and his poetry is, except at its very best, highly diluted. See for example the concluding stanzas of "Childe Harold."

> My task is done — my song hath ceased — my theme
> Has died into an echo; it is fit
> The spell should break of this protracted dream.
> The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit
> My midnight lamp, and, what is writ, is writ.
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> Ye who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
> Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
> A thought which once was his, if on ye swell
> A single recollection, not in vain
> He wore the sandal-schoon and scallop-shell.

Palgrave has remarked in the Preface to the Golden Treasury (Second Series) that "the work [of the latter-day poets] is apt to be less concentrated than that of their

best predecessors, classical or English." The tendency is to sacrifice vigorous thinking for vague impressions. Swinburne, for instance, is continually betrayed into diffuseness in his pursuit of word-music; see among many other examples his poem entitled, "Itylus."[1]

(4) *Structural Perfection.* — With regard to the structure of the lyric, it has been well said that "it must be perfect in proportion to its brevity." We expect,

First, a sedulous regard for unity. The lyric should be confined to one main thought or impression, and the concluding lines should leave a sense of completeness.

Secondly, fluidity, — a natural, wavelike lapsing from one thought to another, from one to another phase of the subject.

Thirdly, either an abrupt intensity in the first line, as,

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!"

or sometimes a level plane of quietness without perceptible rise or fall, as in Collins's "Ode to Evening" (Golden Treasury, CLXXXVI). But more usually in lyrics of any length, the emotion will describe the curve, rising in intensity to the penultimate lines and then subsiding rapidly in a kind of epilogue, as in Coleridge's "Ode to France."

[1] Mr. Chesterton has humorously described a modern poet of the new school who undertakes to express what Pope says of man,

"A being darkly wise and rudely great."

"He would probably produce," he remarks, "something like this,

A creature
Of feature
More dark, more dark, more dark than skies,
Yea, darkly wise, yea, darkly wise,
Darkly wise as a formless fate.
And if he be great, then rudely great,
Rudely great as a plow that plies,
And darkly wise, and darkly wise."

This is, of course, travesty, but it serves to illustrate what we mean by concentration.

Fourthly, a perfect adaptation of movement and tone to the thought and emotion. The impression must be left, not that the poet has first conceived an emotional sentiment and then found language and metre to ornament it, but that the sentiment is itself conceived in its own essential movement and language, that the sentiment, movement, and diction make up one organic whole. This perfection we find in the great poets at their greatest moments when inspiration and power of expression are both working with completest efficiency.

It is this perfect coöperation of sentiment, diction, and movement in producing one effect that lends the greatest charm to the finest poems of Horace, as "Quis desiderio." Nearly all the lyrics in the Golden Treasury will illustrate the principle of unity in idea and impression. It will be helpful to observe what gain in this respect has been secured by Palgrave for Shelley's poem (No. CCCVII) by the omission of the following lines which in the original formed a part of the short middle stanza found in the "Treasury."

I leave this notice on my door
For each accustomed visitor;
"I am gone into the fields
To take what this sweet hour yields;
Reflection, you may come to-morrow,
Sit by the fireside with Sorrow;
You with the unpaid bill, Despair,
You, tiresome verse-reciter, Care,
I will pay you in the grave,
Death will listen to your stave.
Expectation too, be off!
To-day is for itself enough;
Hope, in pity mock not woe
With smiles, nor follow where I go;
Long having lived on thy sweet food,
At length I find one moment good
After long pain — with all your love
This you never told me of."

Then follows "Radiant Sister of the Day," etc.

In the foregoing lines precisely this "radiant" spirit which is the great charm of the poem is changed into something lighter, or less serious in tone. The effect is temporarily marred, and the poem becomes much more perfect by their excision.

For the best examples of fluidity we should turn to the Elizabethan lyrics, as for instance Herrick's "Daffodils," which is as perfect as it is brief. Of the longer lyrics a good example is Gray's "Elegy." Note how thought surges upon thought, one reflection melts away into another, without break or interruption, and without artificial weaving together. We might compare this poem with Milton's "Lycidas," which in spite of splendid diction is notably wanting in this quality. One should not overlook as an instance of this wavelike flow of thought ebbing away to a close, the well-known one-sentence lyric of Tennyson, in "In Memoriam," No. LXXXV.

For adaptation, we should do well to compare Browning's "Prospice" and Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar."[1] The lightness and ease of Tennyson's movement and the softness and sweetness of his diction are not merits in themselves and for their own sake, but because they are perfectly adapted to the gentle lullaby effect of the poem. Such a manner and movement in the poem of Browning would debase to mere triviality his battling lines.

EXERCISES

1. Would you class the following as emotional, as reflective, or as imaginative lyrics? Golden Treasury, CXCVII, CCCLXVI, CCXXXVII, CCIII, LXXXIV, CLXXXVII.

2. Compare for the quality of perfect sincerity Golden Treasury, CCXII, LII, CXXX, CCXLV.

3. Compare for concentration Golden Treasury, CCCXXXII, CLIV, CCXXXIX.

[1] See Golden Treasury, Second Series.

4. Compare for unity and fluidity Golden Treasury, CLXXXVI, CCCXXX.

5. Compare for adaptation Golden Treasury, CCXXXIX, CCXCIX.

For more complete exercises on lyric poetry see suggestion in Appendix I.

CHAPTER IV

Minor Forms of Poetry and Verse

1. Didactic Poetry. — The question has been asked whether poetry can ever be didactic, or, in other words, whether such a species of poetry can be admitted even in theory. The answer seems to depend entirely on one's conception of the term. If by didactic poetry we understand a composition whose professed object is to instruct or to communicate the principles of an art or science in a pleasing manner, obviously it cannot fall under the category of poetry strictly so called. Whatever definition of poetry we may adopt, all will agree that its object is not to communicate information; and the fact of this being done in a pleasing manner is merely an additional circumstance that does not alter the essential character of a composition intended for purposes of instruction. Who would call Horace's "Ars Poetica" a poem, except in scattered passages where the poet leaves instruction for a higher plane? We shall have no hesitation in saying the same of Pope's "Art of Criticism," and the like, if we will bear in mind that cleverness of phrase and felicity of diction, however interesting and captivating, are not the stuff of which true poetry is made.

But we may conceive didactic poetry in a way that will not forbid it a place among the species of poetry. A poet expresses the emotional beauty he beholds in a narrative, for instance, and we call it narrative poetry; in like manner, if a poet has the faculty of beholding the emotional beauty,

grandeur, sublimity, of a system of philosophy or some great fabric of knowledge or art, and can give æsthetic expression to what he beholds, we should perhaps be justified in calling such a poem didactic, though it is only by an extension of the meaning of the adjective. This at all events is the only legitimate use of the term as applied to poetry. "It [didactic poetry] has become in our days the poetical expression of the joy which is felt by an artistic soul in the contemplation of a system of reasoned knowledge. His object is science seen on its æsthetic side." [1]

The didactic poem, therefore, will be

(1) distinctly emotional, and not literally didactic or instructive in manner.

(2) distinctly concrete and imaginative, though hovering in the midst of general and abstract ideas.

Probably Vergil's Georgics come near to fulfilling the ideal of a didactic poem. One feels that though he may attempt to instruct, yet his admiration of and delight in his subject keeps him safely removed from the instructor's attitude, or rather merges it in that of the glowing enthusiast. Note his copiousness of imaginative suggestion in the way of description, metaphors, similes (especially in Georgic IV) and the felicity of the episode of the old man of Tarentum who spends delightful days in his modest garden (IV, ll. 116–145).

Hesiod's "Works and Days" and Lucretius' "De Rerum Natura" are other standard examples of didactic poetry.

2. Satire. — Satire is the literary expression of ridicule at what is vicious or unseemly in human character. Humor, therefore, is an essential feature; censure without humor is not satire, but invective. Satire must also be distinguished from irony; the latter, which consists in using words to convey a meaning opposite to their natural sense, is one of the common devices employed by satire for purposes of

[1] J. Verest, S. J., "Manuel de Littérature," p. 509.

ridicule; but satire embraces many other forms of wit besides irony.

Satire should, properly speaking, be regarded as a quality of literature rather than as a distinct species of poetry. As such it may characterize any kind of poetical production, the drama, the narrative, or the lyric. But, as a branch of poetry, it is customary to apply the term specifically to shorter compositions, more or less didactic in character, in which the satirical purpose obscures or excludes every other. Thus we may say that Sheridan's "Rivals" is satirical; and that Byron's "English Bards" is a satire.

As the essence of satire is ridicule of vice and folly, we may gather that its distinguishing elements are chiefly the following: —

(1) *Truth, i.e.* the truth of fiction, of probability. Human life must be accurately portrayed, though in caricature. Precisely as in caricature, the essential resemblance must be kept, though certain traits may be exaggerated or distorted. The poet must invest his characters with an air of reality. If instead of this he allows them to become mere monsters of vice or mere puppets dressed in the clothes of folly, the chief interest of the poem disappears. Butler's "Hudibras," an ideal satire in many respects, fails in this, and probably for this reason more than any other it is hardly more than a name in English literature to-day.

(2) *Brief Suggestiveness in Description.* — Obviously the satire, in realizing concreteness, must rely upon frequent descriptions both of characters and situations. The wit of the piece requires that these should be brief, quick, pointed, since much of the effectiveness of humor of every kind resides in suggestiveness. No satirist exceeds Juvenal in this respect.

(3) *Effective Raillery.* — The raillery may be genial and playful as in Horace, or bitter and cynical as in Juvenal;

this division may be adopted as classifying all satirists to our own time. Since the twelfth century, allegory has frequently been the source of the satirist's humor, as in "Piers Plowman," and "The Beast's Confession"; others have relied for effectiveness on the pungency of epigram, as Pope in "The Dunciad"; others string their theme about a thread of narrative, as in Butler's "Hudibras"; others again make use of dialogue and thus give a quasi-dramatic turn to the composition, as Pope in the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot."

3. The Pastoral. — The pastoral quality in poetry may be said, like the satirical, to be primarily an attribute of poetry in general, so that we may speak of the pastoral narrative, as Sidney's "Arcadia," the pastoral drama, as Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess," the pastoral elegy, as Milton's "Lycidas," and the pastoral lyric, as many lyrics of Herrick. However, the term is used to designate a type of poem of moderate length, intermediate between the narrative and the lyric, in which rural scenes and episodes, and dialogue between rustic characters, are the chief material.

The distinguishing purpose of pastoral poetry is to represent not the realities of rural life, but chiefly these two more or less fanciful features, its Arcadian simplicity and its idyllic tranquillity.

Theocritus, the chief exemplar of pastoral poetry, aimed at a certain degree of realism. He attempted to make his situations, episodes, and style of language natural and conformable to the rustic character of his theme. Vergil, his imitator, sublimated the diction of the pastoral into a dignity and delicacy which impart to it an irresistible charm, but not the charm to be expected from shepherd-boys. Finally, subsequent imitators, as, for instance, Sir Philip Sidney in his "Arcadia," dressed out their rustics in court attire, investing them not only with artificial language but with artificial aspirations, sentiments, and manners, so as to leave hardly anything bucolic except the setting. Hence we have the two styles of pastoral poetry, the natural and the artificial. Of the

former, the best in English are Spenser's "Shepheardes Calendar" and Gay's "Shepherd's Week"; of the latter, the pastorals of Pope and the seventeenth century imitators of Spenser.[1]

4. Dramatic Lyrics and Dramatic Narratives. — These forms, as the names suggest, are narratives and lyrics which the writer puts upon the lips of some character conceived by him. The dramatic narrative is told from a particular and distinctive point of view, that is, as interpreted by some personage whose relation to the narrative notably modifies the telling of it. The dramatic lyric in like manner expresses a personal emotion, personal, that is, not to the writer but to a character created by the writer. Hence in both we find a double interest, not only that which attaches to the lyric and the narrative proper, but the interest that it is the gift of the creative imagination to awaken, the interest that proceeds from the interpretation of character.

The chief exponent of these forms is Robert Browning. "Abt Vogler," "Andrea del Sarto," "Master Hughes of Saxe-Gotha," "Saul," and "Rabbi ben Ezra," are among the most notable instances of the dramatic lyric. "The Ring and the Book" stands for the typical dramatic narrative, being a series of different versions of the same narrative told by the persons involved in it.

How far these minor forms may be called poetry, in the strict sense of the word, may be often difficult to decide. Satire, if it rises beyond the criticism of mere local or ephemeral trifles, into the large and more universal aspects of life, may be ranked as true poetry, inasmuch as scorn of vice is virtually equivalent to admiration of what is

[1] The terms "Eclogue" and "Bucolic" are sometimes used vaguely as synonymous with the pastoral. Some would confine the term "Eclogue" to pastorals including dialogue; "Bucolics" to those describing the distinctive operations of country life, as Vergil's Georgics. In later times "Idyll" has come to be used as an unpretentious designation for almost any short poem of a picturesque character, as "The Idylls of the King."

noble. Of the dramatic pieces of Robert Browning the same may be said in certain cases. Such poems as "In the Laboratory" and "The Spanish Cloister" are obviously meant to hold up to scorn certain sordid and vicious passions, and, though not satirical, have the same relation to poetry that satire has. On the other hand, "Bishop Bloughram's Apology" and "The Bishop Orders his Tomb in St. Praxed's Church" appear to be nothing more nor less than "studies," — attempts to realize intimately certain extraordinary mental attitudes. One can readily understand that verse with its compression and its power of suggestion would be preferred as a vehicle for such "studies" — but interesting as they may be in subtle penetration of hidden motives and their revelation of the mysterious workings of the heart, one can see no more reason for calling them poetry in the highest sense than if they were written in prose. It is the function of poetry not to excite curiosity and not merely to present problems, whether psychological or scientific, but to represent through the imagination adequate grounds for the noble emotions.

PART THREE

VERSIFICATION

THE music of verse, which we are now to consider in detail, is the most valuable of all the resources of expression placed at the command of the poet. But it is also the most subtle and defiant of analysis. It is impossible to point out by rule or precept how it may be produced, or even to explain fully how it has been produced in a given case. All that can be attempted is to indicate the elements which enter into the composition of verse-music, that by so doing the student may be awakened to a keener consciousness of its presence and power in actual poetry.

These elements may be grouped into two classes. The first includes all that pertains to the measurement of verse, its division into equal or equivalent combinations of syllables, called feet, lines, stanzas. This recurrent rhythm of poetry is known as *Metre*, and will be considered in the first chapter following.

The second class deals with the agreeable succession of vowels and consonants, which in some mysterious way evoke emotions by their sweetness or harshness, and their relation to other vowels and consonants near them. We may designate this as the *Melody* of verse, and its elementary forms will be the subject of the second chapter.

CHAPTER I

Metre

I. Accent

The difference between verse and prose may be seen by comparing the following lines: —

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.

In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

We observe that in the first line, a certain stress falls on every second syllable, and that consequently we may divide the line into five groups, each consisting of an unstressed, followed by a stressed, syllable: —

˘ ¯ ˘ ¯ ˘ ¯ ˘ ¯ ˘ ¯
The cur | few tolls | the knell | of par | ting day.

In the second line there is no such recurrence, — the stresses are placed irregularly, and the syllables do not fall into regular groups. The recurrence of similar verse-factors, as seen in the first line, is what we call "*metre.*"

1. **Word-accent.** — Every word, and every syllable of a word, must, of course, receive some degree of force in utterance; word-accent is that relatively greater force which is put upon one syllable over another, as *sórrow, sublíme.* In words of more than two syllables we find also a secondary accent on syllables separated one or more places from the principal accent, as récollèct, dèmonstrátion, cúmulative, aùthorizátion. Syllables without either primary or second-

ary accent are called *unaccented.* Monosyllables may, for convenience, be regarded as single *accented* syllables.

2. Verse-stress is the ictus placed upon certain syllables recurring at regular intervals in a verse of poetry, and thus determining the rhythm of the verse, as

Absent | thee from | feli | city | awhile.

In this line the verse-stress is precisely identical with the word-accent. If we examine the following lines, we shall find that this is not always the case.

Oh! thy lu | minous face, | thine impe | rious eyes. —

And the light | thereof hurled | and the noise | thereof rolled.

In the first of these two lines, the secondary accent on the last syllable of "luminous" receives no verse-stress, and in the second line the entire word "thereof" is without verse-stress.

3. Rules. — The question, therefore, arises how far these two — word-accent and verse-stress — may or must coincide in a verse of poetry. The laws may be briefly formulated as follows: —

(*a*) The verse-stress never falls on an unaccented syllable; nor on a secondary accent, unless the primary accent of the same word is also stressed.

(*b*) On the other hand, the verse-stress does not necessarily fall on *every* accented syllable; that is, accented syllables may be unstressed in the verse.

(*c*) Monosyllables, since we regard them as accented syllables, may receive verse-stress.

Or, still more simply: —

(*a*) Accented syllables, including monosyllables, are common; that is, stressed or unstressed.

(*b*) Unaccented syllables are unstressed.

Sometimes, by way of exception to the second of these rules, the verse-stress is found to fall, not on the word-accent, but on the syllable adjoining it. Thus: —

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
In pro | fuse strains | of un | preme | dita | ted art.

— in the word "profuse," the verse-stress is on the first syllable, the word-accent on the second. In this case both syllables should be pronounced with nearly equal stress, and so the accent may be said to hover over the two syllables; whence we call it "the hovering accent."

Similarly: —

The rude *forefathers* of the hamlet sleep. —

That on the stretched *forefinger* of all time. —

II. The Metrical Foot and Verse

1. The Foot. — In general a metrical foot is any regular, single group of stressed and unstressed syllables. In each normal foot of English poetry we find one stressed, and one or two unstressed, syllables.

The principal feet in use are: —

1. The Iambus (⏑—)
2. The Anapest (⏑⏑—)
3. The Trochee (—⏑)
4. The Dactyl (—⏑⏑)

2. The Verse. — A verse is a line of poetry made up usually of several feet, but sometimes containing one only. A verse consisting of one foot is called a monometer; of two feet, a dimeter; of three, a trimeter; of four, a tetrameter; of five, a pentameter; of six, a hexameter.

Hence an iambic (anapestic, trochaic, dactylic) monometer (dimeter, etc.) is the name given to a verse of one or two iambi (anapests, etc.). The iambic hexameter is also called an "Alexandrine," from the twelfth century

romance concerning Alexander the Great, written in this measure. The iambic pentameter is known as the "heroic" measure, being the metre of the English epic.

(*a*) Pure Iambic Verses: —

A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
Which like a wounded snake drags its slow length along.

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon.

With ravish'd ears
The Monarch hears,
Assumes the god,
Affects the nod.

(*b*) Pure Anapestic Verses: —

I am out of humanity's reach,
I must finish my journey alone.

She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps.

To a precipice goes,
Where a leap from above
Would soon finish his woes.

(*c*) Pure Trochaic Verses: —

Ah, distinctly I remember, it was in the bleak December.

Holy, holy, holy, all the Saints adore Thee.

Spake full well in language quaint and olden.

Lives of great men all remind us.

Sleeps a voice unspoken.

(*d*) Pure Dactylic Verses: —

Cannon to right of them.

Here we go off on the "London and Birmingham,"
Bidding adieu to the foggy metropolis.

Still it kept flowing and flowing, and other streams ran to its bosom.

3. Metrical Variations. — We have thus far considered the typical measures of English verse, in which the entire line is made up of a regular succession of iambi or anapests or trochees or dactyls. But English verse does not adhere rigidly to a given type. Many variations are permitted which help to give that flexible, mobile quality which belongs to all good verse.

The chief of these variations are the following: —

Substitution. — An anapestic foot frequently takes the place of an iambus, and *vice versa*. The same interchange occurs between trochees and dactyls.

My thoughts | still cling | *to the moul* | dering past.

Solemnly | answered the | *sea*, *and* | mingled its | roar with the | *dirges*.

Inversion. — Feet are sometimes inverted; that is, a trochee takes the place of an iambus, a dactyl of an anapest, and *vice versa*. This occurs very frequently at the beginning of the line, and in nearly every case inversion is preceded by at least a slight pause in the sense.

Through cav | erns meas | ureless | to man,
Down to | a sun | less sea.

This | deli | cious place
For us | too large, | where thy | abun | dance wants
Parta | kers, and, | uncropt, | *falls to* | the ground.

Catalexis. — The unstressed syllable (or syllables) beginning an iambic (or anapestic) verse may be omitted; similarly the unstressed syllable (or syllables) at the end of a

trochaic (or dactylic) verse. The verse is then said to be *Catalectic.*

Take her up | tenderly,
Lift her with | care. ∧

∧ Who | would be
A mer | man bold,
∧ Sit | ting alone,
∧ Sing | ing alone,
∧ Un | der the sea.

Comrades, | leave me | here a | little, | while as | yet 'tis | early morn. ∧

Hypermeter. — An unstressed syllable may be added to the beginning of a trochaic or the end of an iambic line. The verse is then called *hypermetric.*

When the hounds | of Spring | are on Win | ter's tra : *ces.*

Many a | green isle | needs must | be
In the: deep wide | sea of | mise | ry.

Pause. — In lyric poetry, and especially in the song, a pause occasionally takes the place of a short or unstressed syllable in a line. As

Break, | ∧ Break, | ∧ Break,
On thy cold | grey stones, | O Sea.

These variations must not be so used as to obscure the general movement of the verse; but for the rest, the ear

must be the arbiter whether the variation is allowable in particular cases.

4. Characteristic Effects of Various Feet and Metrical Variations. — It must not be supposed that a particular metre is adopted arbitrarily, or that departures from the typical metre are forced upon the poet by exigencies of language or expression. A writer uses this or that form of verse, not as if it were preferable in itself, but simply because it is better adapted to express his subject as he conceives it. This is also true of the manner in which he handles his verse. If his lines are regular, it is because he aims at a particular effect thereby; if he uses inversions or substitutions or the like, it is because these too are in accord with his feeling. It is not possible to classify every effect wrought out by the poet, but some general observations may be made which will be a guide to us in the further study of metrical effects.

First. — Anapestic and dactylic lines, containing as they do a large proportion of unaccented syllables, have a lighter and more rapid movement than iambic and trochaic lines. Hence they are suited to fervid emotion, quick action, flowing melody.

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
'Good speed!' cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
'Speed!' echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns," he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

These examples illustrate the rapidity of the anapestic and dactylic metres, but a great variety of musical effects may be elicited from them. Note how, in the following lines, the rapidity is diminished by the number of long syllables and by the verse-pauses, and thus lightness is converted into languor. Conceive the same lines in an iambic rhythm, and see how the effect would be lost, the languor unduly converted into strength.

Let your hands meet round the weight of my head,
Lift ye my feet as the feet of the dead,
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.

So, too, the dactyls and anapests in the following add by their easy flow a softness to the pathos:

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care,
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young and so fair.

But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Can never come back to me.

Secondly. — We have seen the difference in musical effect between trisyllabic and dissyllabic feet, *i.e.* anapests or dactyls as contrasted with iambi or trochees. Let us now compare metres consisting of feet beginning with unstressed syllables (iambi and anapests) with those consisting of feet beginning with stressed syllables (trochees and dactyls). The former measure we may call by the general name of the *iambic movement*, the latter the *trochaic movement*. Their characters are quite distinct. The former creates the sense of an upward movement, and the general impression tends to be grave and conclusive. The latter suggests a downward movement, and gives rather the impression of lightness and expectancy. This, however, is frequently modified and altered by countless other influences.

Observe, for instance, how masculine and decisive is the rhythm in Scott's "Marmion" as compared with Longfellow's "Hiawatha":—

By this, though deep the evening fell,
Still rose the battle's deadly swell,
For still the Scots around their King,
Unbroken fought in desperate ring.
The English shafts in volleys hailed,
In headlong charge their horse assailed,
Front, flank and rear the squadrons sweep,
To break the Scottish circle deep
That fought around their King.

Then began the deadly conflict,
Hand to hand among the mountains;
From his eyry screamed the eagle,
The Keneu, the great war-eagle,
Sat upon the crags around them,
Wheeling flapped his wings above them.
Like a tall tree in the tempest
Bent and lashed the giant bulrush;
And in masses huge and heavy
Crashing fell the fatal Wawbeek.

It should be observed that many lines are so constructed that it is possible to scan them either as trochaic or as iambic. But this is by no means an indifferent matter, as the two movements are so unlike. In determining, we are to bear in mind that by far the larger part of English verse is iambic, and so a presumption exists that doubtful lines are of this measure; but the metre of the whole poem must be studied and its general character considered before we can rightly settle this point. Let us take for example Shelley's "Skylark." The first line may easily be taken for a regular trochaic trimeter:—

Hail to | thee, blithe | spirit.

Yet the whole rhythm of the poem is undoubtedly iambic. The long basic lines at the ends of the stanzas which are so important

in the rhythmical effect are all carefully constructed iambi; and in many of the short lines the emphatic first word suggests a pause equivalent to the omitted short syllable of an inverted iambus. We conclude, therefore, that the poem should be scanned as iambic measure, thus: —

∧ Hail! | to thee, | blithe spi | rit!
∧ Bird | thou ne | ver | wert,
∧ That | from heaven, | or near | it
∧ Pour | est thy | full heart
In pro | fuse strains | of un | premed | ita | ted art.

Thirdly. — Perfect regularity of metre gives the character of steadiness, suggests quiet, unobtrusive emotion, or sometimes lends a sort of formal dignity to the verse. The multiplication of short syllables, as the substitution of the anapest for the iambus, suggests lightness or grace, or sometimes gives emphasis. An inverted foot, as the substitution of a trochee for an iambus, particularly in the middle of a line, marks emphasis or lends some additional stress of emotion. But note that in dramatic poetry changes in the metre are introduced frequently for the mere purpose of making the movement more easy and conversational.

Part of the reposeful movement of Gray's "Elegy" is due to the regularity of the metre.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades | the glim | *mering land* | scape on | the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,

— ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
Save where | the bee | tle wheels | his dron | ing flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

In these stanzas we note only two variations from type, the first, in the fifth line, "glimmering," which is delicately onomatopœic; the second, in the seventh line, where a light emphasis is given to "save" by the inversion, in order to prepare for the parallel "save that" in the following stanza.

Rapidity is suggested by the additional unaccented syllable in

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —
And flash | ing round | and round | and wheeled | *in an arch.*

⏑ — ⏑⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
The *ca* | *taracts blow* | their trum | pets from | the steep.

But the lightness is converted unto unwieldiness by the length of the unaccented syllables in Milton's line

— that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all His works

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
Creat | ed hu | *gest that swim* | the o | cean stream.

Emphasis is apparent in the following inversions:—

Go tell the prince; *run to* the Capulets.

A hermit who had prayed, *laboured* and prayed.

EXERCISES

1. Scan the following: (*a*) Golden Treasury, CII, CLIV, CCVI, and Tennyson's "Dying Swan."

(*b*) Golden Treasury, CLI, CLIX, CLXXVIII.

(*c*) Golden Treasury, CCXXXIX, CCXXXIV, CLXXX, CIII, CCCXXXIV.

(*d*) Tennyson's "Sweet and Low," "The Merman," "Maud," V, XII, XVII.

2. Indicate the metre and the musical effect it produces in the following: Tennyson's "The Revenge," Collins's "Ode to the Passions."

3. Compare the metres and the effects produced by them in the following: Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" and "In Memoriam"; Poe's "Raven" and "Ullalume."

III. Cæsura and Emphasis

1. The Cæsura. — The cæsura or cæsural pause occurs in English poetry whenever there is a natural pause in the sense, that is, where good judgment requires a pause in reading. We have every variety in the length of the cæsura, but for convenience we may distinguish three, — the pause of the period, the pause of the comma, and the pause less than that of the comma.

The cæsura may occur at the end of the line, or at any place within it, but rarely, and only for special effects, after the first syllable or before the last. When there is a distinct cæsura at the end, the line is said to be "end-stopped"; when there is no cæsura at the end, the line is said to be "enjambed."

Note the cæsuras of various lengths, and a convenient way of indicating them, in the following: —

The face of nature | we no more survey, ||
All glares alike | without distinction gay: |||
But true expression || like the unchanging sun||
Clears and improves | whate'er it lights upon.|||

The rhythm of blank verse is aided by varying the cæsura, both in its position and its length. If every line is end-stopped, an unpleasant monotony ensues, as if they were moulded separately and laid together block upon block. And if the cæsura occurs uniformly at or near the middle of the line, a seesaw rhythm results between the two halves. Both of these defects are noticeable in the preceding example. Contrast the following lines from Tennyson's "Ulysses": —

It little profits that an idle king,||
By this still hearth, || among these barren crags, ||
Matched with an aged wife,| I mete and dole
Unequal laws | unto a savage race ||
That hoard, | and sleep, | and feed, || and know not me.|||

2. Emphasis. — This is the elocutionary stress given to certain words in a sentence in order to bring them into prominence. Take the line,

Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow.

Without going into minute distinctions, it is clear that the words "thine," "of," "the," "shall," are unemphatic compared with the other words, — and so in every other sentence. Now, in the first place, we observe in the above line, and in almost every line of verse, that the verse-stress must often fall on unemphatic words. On the other hand, emphatic words should not, if possible, occur in unstressed parts of the foot, — though this rule is not always strictly observed. Thus in the following, the strictly emphatic word "he" falls on an unaccented part of the line. This is so plainly evident that in reading we should have recourse to the "hovering accent" mentioned above, and put an equal stress on both words, "he" and "dies."

Thou should'st die | as he dies | for whom none | sheddeth tears.

In the following we have a stress on the emphatic "from" in verse 3, but no stress on the contrasted "to" in verse 4: —

And only when we found in earth and air
And heaven and hell, that such could nowhere be,
That we | could not | flee *from* | thee an | ywhere,
We fled | *to* thee.

NOTE. — It is absolutely important to observe that the position of the emphasis in the line has much to do with the beauty of the verse. When the emphasis in line after line falls in the same position, for example, in the third and fifth foot, or second and fourth, or second, fourth, and fifth, and so on, an intolerable monotony is the result. The

secret is in skilfully changing the position of the emphasis and in interchanging lines of many emphatic words with lines containing a larger number of those that are unemphatic.

This monotony or sing-song is very well exemplified in the following, where three out of the four lines have an important emphasis on the first and third stress, and a sort of half emphasis on the second: —

I am MONARCH of *all* I SURVEY,
My RIGHT there is *none* to DISPUTE;
From the CENTRE all *round* to the SEA
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.

Compare the following in the same metre, where the emphasis is varied: —

Before the BEGINNING of DAYS
There came to the MAKING of MAN
TIME with a *gift* of TEARS,
GRIEF with a GLASS that *ran*.

Note the unpleasant sameness in the following lines, due partly to the fact that in all but the first there is an unemphatic accent in the third foot.

How happy is the blameless vestal's lot,
The world forgetting, by the world forgot;
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind,
Each prayer accepted, and each wish resigned.

The following is in the same metre, with the same arrangement of rhymes, yet it leaves an absolutely different impression. This comes in good part from the constant variation in the emphasis.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

IV. The Stanza and Blank Verse

1. The Stanza. — A stanza is a group of lines taken as a unit of measure and generally bound together by some scheme of rhymes. It would be impossible to give an account of all the stanzas in use in English. The following represent the principal varieties: —

The *Rhyming Couplet*, frequently of iambic pentameters, as: —

> Words are like leaves, and where they most abound,
> Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

The *Quatrain*, either of alternate rhymes, as in Gray's "Elegy," or of middle and end rhymes, as in Tennyson's "In Memoriam": —

> Take wings of fancy and ascend,
> And in a moment set thy face
> Where all the starry heavens of space
> Are sharpened to a needle's end.

The *Spenserian Stanza*, consisting of eight iambic pentameters followed by an Alexandrine, the rhyme scheme being as follows: *a b a b b c b c c*.

> His haughtie Helmet, horrid all with gold,
> Both glorious brightnesse and great terrour bredd:
> For all the crest a Dragon did enfold
> With greedie pawes, and over all did spredd
> His golden winges: his dreadful hideous hedd,
> Close crouched on the bever, seemed to throw
> From flaming mouth bright sparckles fiery redd,
> That sudden horrour to faint hartes did show;
> And scaly tayle was stretcht adowne his back full low.
>
> — "The Faerie Queene," Canto VII, **stanza 31.**

The *Sonnet*, consisting of fourteen iambic pentameters. It is divided into two distinct parts separated by a full pause; these are: an octave, made up of two quatrains,

whose rhyme-scheme is *a b b a*, repeated, and a sestet, made up of two tercets, whose rhyme-scheme is variable. The proper rhythm of the sonnet is marred by ending with a rhyming couplet.[1]

The lost days of my life, until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?

Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here: but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see;
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
"I am thyself, — what hast thou done to me?
And I, — and I, — thyself," lo! each one saith, —
"And thou thyself to all eternity."

— D. G. ROSSETTI, "Lost Days."

In judging of the characteristic effects of the various stanzas, we may observe the following general principles: —

(*a*) Rhyme has a binding character, *i.e.* it rivets together the rhyming lines, and hence tends to separate them from following lines into a distinct unity of their own.

(*b*) The nearer the rhymes approach each other, and the more conspicuous the rhyming sounds, the more this effect of the rhyme is felt.

(*c*) A line differing in length from the normal line of the stanza, whether shorter or longer, arrests attention and hence makes for emphasis, shorter lines tending towards lightness or abruptness, longer lines towards fullness, or

[1] The Shakespearian sonnet is constructed differently — consisting of three quatrains of alternate rhyming lines, followed by a rhyming couplet.

repose or conclusiveness. But these principles can only be realized and appreciated by reading and rereading the poets.

From these principles we conclude as follows: —

(*a*) The *Rhyming Couplet*, from the very fact that it couples lines and tends to make of the pair a distinct unity, is adapted to sententious and antithetic poetry, and is less suitable to the even continuity of a narrative. Yet this broken effect may be greatly lessened by various means, such as inconspicuous rhymes, run-over lines, and the like.

(*b*) The *Alternating Rhyming Quatrain* breaks the movement in much the same way, but four lines prolong the expression, and diminish the tendency to abruptness and antithesis. Hence this stanza is used with fine effect in the long meditative pentameters of Gray's "Elegy."

(*c*) The "*In Memoriam*" *Stanza*, while it strengthens the interior rhymes, softens the end rhyme by separating it so far from the rhyming word. The effect of this is to make the unity of the stanza less compact, and to give a smoothness and continuity between the stanzas that would be difficult to realize in the metre of the "Elegy."

(*d*) The *Spenserian Stanza* has been well called the metre of word-painting. Of all metres it is the least adapted to the continuous narrative; the Alexandrine line at the end of each stanza, reënforced with a third rhyme, gives a decided termination which it is impossible to escape, and the length of the stanza tempts the writer into "lingering descriptions." But the complexity of the rhyme, and what Shelley calls the "harmonious arrangement of the pauses," give peculiar brilliancy to this stanza.

(*e*) The *Sonnet* is the most elaborate and the most formal of verse-forms, and is best suited to grave or lofty reflections. It should possess a perfect unity of thought, completed with the fourteen lines. The sestet must be separated from the

(*b*) The use of the Spenserian stanza for a translation of Vergil's "Æneid."

2. Criticize the following sonnets according to principles mentioned above: —

(*a*) "Memory," Golden Treasury, XXXIX.

(*b*) "On Chapman's Homer," Golden Treasury, CCX.

(*c*) "The Seasons," Golden Treasury, CCCXXXIII.

3. Select the finest cadences of about two lines from Tennyson's "Ulysses," "Morte d'Arthur," Introduction to "The Princess."

CHAPTER II

Verse-Melody

UNDER this head we include all the features of versification that regard, not the measurement of the verse, but the music of its individual words. The most conspicuous melody comes from rhyme.

1. Rhyme. — A single rhyme is a rhyme of one syllable. The requisites are: —

(1) That the vowel sound in the rhyming syllables and the succeeding consonant sounds be identical.

(2) That the sounds preceding the vowel sound be different.

(3) That the rhyming syllables be accented.

Thus, *rhyme — time;* but not *thyme — time,* nor *time — thine,* nor *city — defy.*

A multiple (double or triple) rhyme is a rhyme of two or three syllables. The requisites are: —

(1) That the accent of the rhyming words fall on the penult or antepenult.

(2) That the accented syllables of the two words conform to the rule of the single rhyme.

(3) That the unaccented syllables following the accented be identical in sound.

Thus, *city — pity;* not *charity — pity,* nor *charity — rarify,* nor *cherishes — perisheth.*

An imperfect rhyme is one in which the vowel and subsequent consonant sounds are not quite identical in the rhyming words, but are similar, or, sometimes, only similarly spelled. The practice of the best poets alone should be imitated, and sparingly. Thus, *love* — *Jove*, *light* — *wit*, *care* — *war* (Pope); *lost* — *coast*, *towers* — *adores* (Gray).

The usual place of the rhyme is at the end of the line, but it occurs also at the cæsural pause. Sometimes two rhyming words are introduced with fine effect at unexpected places in the line, and even, though rarely, in immediate succession.

I sat with Doris the shepherd *maiden*,[1]
Her crook was *laden*[1] with wreathed *flowers*;[2]
I sat and *wooed her*[3] through sunlight *wheeling*[4]
And shadows *stealing*,[4] for hours and *hours*.[2]

And she, my Doris, whose lap encloses
Wild summer roses of sweet perfume,
The while I *sued her*,[3] kept hushed, and hearkened
Till shades had darkened from gloss to gloom.

—H. J. MUNDY, "Doris."

There lived a singer in France of old
By the tideless, dolorous, midland sea;
In a *land* of *sand* and ruin and gold
There shone one woman and none but she.

—SWINBURNE, "The Triumph of Time."

Airy, *fairy* Lillian.

And over them the sea wind sang
Shrill, *chill*, with flakes of foam.

Besides the obvious musical effect of harmonizing sounds, rhyme, first, gives a distinct emphasis to words, and, sec-

ondly, as noted above, tends to couple together the rhyming lines. Both are increased by the prominence of the rhymes and by their proximity to each other.

EXERCISES

Point out the defects in the following rhymes: —

Close the door, the shutters close,
Or thro' the windows we shall see
The nakedness and vacancy
Of the dark deserted house.

From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly.

When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
On freedom's hearth, grew dim with empire.

We wandered to the Pine Forest,
The lightest wind was in its nest.

2. Quantity. — What we call the "quantity" of syllables is the time required to pronounce them, as "drear," long in quantity; "it," short in quantity. In Latin and Greek they were divided for verse purposes into long and short, and every syllable, with few exceptions, was definitely classed, according to known rules, as one or the other. In English there is no such distinction, but every varying degree of quantity is to be found and is felt in the verse-structure. Usually a syllable is prolonged by open vowel-sounds (contrast, for instance, "see" and "met"), and by a multiplication of consonants (contrast "rocks" and "of").

The qûantity of a syllable, therefore, is quite distinct from its accent. A long syllable is not necessarily accented, nor a short one unaccented. Thus "récompense" carries the accent on its first syllable, though the two following are longer in quantity. Compare in the same way "disfígurement," — "transfér," — "pástimes," — "foretéll."

Though quantity is not the determining factor in the measurement of English verse, yet it plays a conspicuous part in making up its melody. The tone of the line, its dignity, grace, rapidity, all depend in large measure on the judicious use of long and short syllables. The following are guiding rules of the most general kind: —

(*a*) Long syllables retard the movement, hence are appropriate to solemn, stately, mournful emotions. A surplus of long syllables, especially in unaccented parts of the verse, makes the verse cumbersome and unwieldy.

(*b*) Short syllables accelerate the movement, hence are suitable for light, gay, eager emotion. A surplus of short syllables, especially in accented parts, makes the verse trivial and flippant.

But it may be observed here that emphatic words, — words charged with significance, — even when short in quantity, arrest attention and so seem to retard the movement.

Note the effects of quantity in the following: —

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll.

The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea.

Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn.

The murmur of innumerable bees.

Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death.

The easy flow of the following line is broken partly by the succession of long syllables at the end.

Who could offer the sunbloom of morn on her cheek to *Death's drear hand* to blast?

Part of the triviality of the following is due to the rapid patter of the short syllables: —

Then we let off paper kisses, each of which contained a motto,
And she listened as I read them, till her mother told her not to.

The effect of mere emphasis instead of syllabic quantity in giving weight to a verse may be seen in the second of these lines: —

And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

EXERCISES

1. Underline the longer syllables in the first stanza of the "Ode to Autumn," Golden Treasury, CCCIII.

2. Compare the proportion of long and short syllables in the following: —

(*a*) Third stanza in Milton's "Ode on the Nativity" (Golden Treasury, LXXXV), and fifth stanza in Spenser's "Prothalamion" (Golden Treasury, LXXIV).

(*b*) Golden Treasury, CLVI and LXV.

3. Alliteration and Assonance. — One of the sources of melodic effect particularly characteristic of English verse is *alliteration*, that is, the repetition of identical consonant sounds in nearly connected words or syllables. Like all artistic devices, alliteration should be unobtrusive, and not distract attention from the matter to the manner of expression. Hence, some of the most delicate effects are produced by *internal* alliteration; that is, of consonants in the middle of words.

Alliteration increases the value of the consonants alliterated; it gives additional smoothness and sweetness to the soft labials and greater strength to the harder sounds; it is used besides in a variety of ways for onomatopœia.

Effective Initial Alliteration: —

All night long in the world of sleep
Skies and waters were soft and deep:
Shadow clothed them and silence made
Soundless music of dream and shade:
All above us the livelong night,
Shadow kindled with sense of light;
All around us the brief night long,
Silence, laden with sense of song.

— SWINBURNE, "Loch Torridon."[1]

Excessive Alliteration: —

O wind, O wingless wind, that walk'st the sea
Weak wind, wing-broken, wearier wind than we.

Delicate Internal Alliteration: —

And forthwith Light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,
Sprung from the deep; and from her native east,
To journey through the aëry gloom began,
Sphered in a radiant cloud.

— "Paradise Lost," Book VII, ll. 243 ff.

Assonance is the repetition of the same or kindred vowel sounds in successive or approximate syllables. It is less conspicuous than alliteration, but plays a more important part in the melody of the verse. For the melodic effect of assonance see below, under Onomatopœia.

Roman Virgil, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
Wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre.

— TENNYSON, "To Virgil."

It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year:
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

— POE, "Ullalume."

[1] Copyright, 1904, by Harper and Brothers.

EXERCISES

1. Group together the alliterated words in the following, underlining the internal alliterated syllables: Golden Treasury, CCCXXXIV, Golden Treasury, CCXCVII; Tennyson's "Arabian Nights," first stanzas.

2. Group together words that are marked by assonance in the following: Golden Treasury, CCCXXI, first stanza, Golden Treasury, CCCVII, Tennyson's "Lotus Eaters," first and second stanzas.

4. **Onomatopœia.** — Onomatopœia is the resemblance between the sound of words and the sense they convey. We should distinguish between the following: —

(*a*) *Direct Onomatopœia,* — when the vowel and consonant sounds actually imitate in their sound what is described in the verse. This is seen most conspicuously in such words as "hiss," "roar," "rattle," "scream," "whisper," and the like. It is exemplified in the following lines: —

> Ere to black Hecate's summons
> The shard-borne beetle with his *drowsy hums*
> Hath *rung* night's *yawning peal*, there shall be *done*
> A deed of dreadful note.
>
> — "Macbeth," Act III, Sc. 2, ll. 41 ff.

> The lisp of leaves and the *ripple of rain.*
>
> The *moan* of doves in *immemorial elms.*

(*b*) *Suggestive Onomatopœia,* — when the sound of vowels and consonants does not reproduce, but merely suggests what is described. For certain vowels and consonants seem to have a relationship with certain emotions and to possess the power of calling up these emotions by their very sound. Thus the *i* and *e* sounds are allied to notions of littleness and delicacy, and of levity and mirth. The broad *o* and *ah* sounds suggest breadth, largeness, repose, and hence contemplation, melancholy, and the like. *D* sounds may be

representative of hardness; *l* and *t* sounds, of smallness; heavy combinations of consonants imply difficulty, effort. For a complete analysis of this matter the student is referred to Raymond's "Poetry as a Representative Art."

Note the suggestive onomatopœia in the following lines: —

She comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone,
* * * * * *
Drawn with a team of little atomies,
* * * * * *
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film.

The little fleet
Touched, clinked and clashed, and vanished.

X sounds and *t*, *b*, *k* are used in the following to suggest hardness: —

And many strokes, though with a little axe,
Hew down and fell the *hardest-timbered* oak.

You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts.

In the following the consonant sounds are light, and the vowel sounds for the most part closed or inconspicuous as far as the penultimate line, where the broad, open sounds succeed, and the selection ends with a good specimen of direct onomatopœia.

Sport
Went hand in hand with science; otherwhere
Pure sport: a herd of boys with clamour bowl'd
And stump't the wicket; babies rolled about
Like tumbled fruit in grass; and men and maids
Arranged a country dance, and flew through light
And shadow, while the twanging violin
Struck up with "Soldier-laddie," and overhead
The broad ambrosial aisles of lofty lime
Made noise with bees and breeze from end to end.

—TENNYSON, "The Princess."

But suggestive onomatopœia may be brought about in other ways besides the use of vowel and consonant sounds. Indeed, all the so-called artistic effects of the various verse features which have been alluded to in the preceding pages are nothing more nor less than instances of suggestive onomatopœia. Thus we may bring into service —

(1) The length of the line; for a short line is suggestive of less importance than a long one.

(2) The character of the metre; for the iambic movement is more conclusive and final than the trochaic.

(3) The compensating pause and inversions of feet, which at least are indicative of emphasis.

(4) The quantity of the syllables; for long syllables suggest a greater deliberation and gravity than short ones.

In these lines, the distribution of the emphasis, the arrangement of pauses, the delay and acceleration of the syllables, are onomatopœic as well as the sound of the vowels and consonants: —

> Sate sanguine divom,
> Tros Anchisiade, facilis descensus Averno;
> noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis;
> sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,
> hoc opus, hic labor est. Pauci, quos aequus amavit
> Juppiter, aut ardens evexit ad aethera virtus,
> dis geniti potuere.
>
> — "Aeneid," Book VI, ll. 125 ff.

Delicately suggested onomatopœia of some kind seems to be at the heart of all great poetic music. One might say that this was precisely the distinctive trait that separated the best poetry from the mediocre or the good. But the onomatopœia that we now refer to is not a broad and literal imitation of sounds, but the delicate, scarcely perceptible suggestion that lies beyond the reach of the untrained ear entirely, and in the case of the poet himself is achieved quite unconsciously, the power of his emotion controlling and directing his musical instinct into the channel of perfect expression.

ALLITERATION	VERSE-ANALYSIS OF PARADISE LOST, IV, 598–609	OPEN VOWELS
N–T	Now came still evening on,| and twilight gray	ow–e–i–a
R–L	Had in her sober livery all things clad: ‖‖	o–aw
S–N–B	Silence accompanied; ‖ for beast and bird, ‖	i–e
TH–S	They to their grassy couch,| these to their nests,‖	a–ow–e
L–T–N	Were slunk,‖ all but the wakeful nightingale: ‖	aw–a–i–a
L–N–S	She all night long her amorous descant sung; ‖‖	e–i–aw
S–M	Silence was pleased. ‖‖ Now glowed the firmament	i–e–ow–o
L–S–R	With living sapphires; ‖‖ Hesperus, that led	i
ST–T	The starry host,| rode brightest,‖ till the moon|	ah–o–o–i–oo
D–T	Rising in clouded majesty,| at length	i–ow
N–L	Apparent queen,| unveiled her peerless light,‖	e–a–e–i
D–R–L–T	And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw. ‖‖	aw–ah–oo
	Suggested Onomatopœia: particularly in ll. 3 and 4. Note s-sounds. ll. 5 and 6. Note open vowels.	
	Finest Cadences: last three and half lines. Note sense suspended, and sweeping to conclusion. Excellent example of a verse-paragraph.	

VERSE-ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST STANZA OF KEATS'S ODE TO THE NIGHTINGALE

(1) My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
(2) My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
(3) Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
(4) One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
(5) 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
(6) But being too happy in thy happiness,
(7) That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
(8) In some melodious plot
(9) Of beechen green and shadows numberless,
(10) Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

Metre, — iambic pentameter: eighth line iambic trimeter.
Rhyme scheme: *a b a b c d e c d e.*

(1) Note the fine effect of the inversion in foot 2, which together with two long syllables preceding, give a very strong emphasis; also the suggested onomatopœia in the long vowel and consonant sounds at the end of the verse.

(2) The run-over phrasing from lines 1 to 2 and the sudden pause at the end of the first foot in line 2 breaks the smoothness and suggests the effort of a drowsy mind.

(3) Note the alliteration of *t* and *d* sounds, implying weight and heaviness.

(4) The long word "Lethe-wards" and the hard beat of the two succeeding monosyllables are peculiarly imitative of the idea expressed.

(5) An unemphatic line run off rapidly in lighter syllables.

(6) "-Ing" in "being" is pronounced so rapidly that the effect of the anapest in the second line is not perceptible. A strong emphasis is obtained for the thematic idea of the whole poem by the echo, "happy" — "happiness."

(7) "Light-winged Dryad of the trees" is surely the

most emotional phrase of the stanza. Body is given to the phrase by the long-quantitied word "light-winged," and an onomatopœic lightness by the succession of three short syllables before the last.

(8) The unexpected ending of this line after the third foot gives special prominence to the last syllable, *i.e.* to the rhyming word. This draws attention to the recurrence of the rhyme after two intervening lines.

(9) Note the assonance in "beechen green," also the fine musical *phrase* "In some melodious plot of beechen green and shadows numberless." The exquisite succession of liquids and the variety of vowel sounds make precisely a "melody."

(10) The last line must have weight of sound and emphasis of sense sufficient to bring the long stanza to a satisfactory close. Both are achieved. But it must be remarked that the poet has exposed the line to the danger of being scanned in dactyls, thus: "Síngest of | súmmer in | fúll-throated | eáse." This would be fatal to the stanza. The line would be more perfect if a more emphatic syllable replaced the short word "in," as in the last line of the other stanzas.

The stanza itself is distinctly bi-partite. The quatrain (first four lines) forms a complete unity, and is followed by a pause. The second part — the sestet — either explains the thought of the first part as here, or repeats it as in the second stanza, or in some other way gives it new meaning.

EXERCISES

1. Make a verse-analysis, like either or both of the preceding, of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," Golden Treasury, CCCXVI.

2. Illustrate from Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur" and "Ulysses" the following remark of Mr. Saintsbury on the verse of these two poems: "The 'Morte' verse is the more undulating, the more entwined, the more various and excursive. . . . The other, 'Ulysses,' is slightly more rhetorical, closer-knit, more sententious and weighty, to be pronounced slower."

APPENDIX II

The Diction of Poetry

I. The Poet's Vocabulary

(1) Preparatory to the study of poetic diction, let the student select any modern poem, say, of Tennyson, Wordsworth, Shelley, or Keats, and after noting the vocabulary used, that is, the individual words apart from the context, consider the availability of each for use in prose.

Next let him in the same way note the word-list in any selection of modern prose, and consider each word's suitability to enter into verse-composition.

This investigation is bound to reveal a similarity between the language of poetry and prose that will prove astonishing to the inexperienced. It will help to remove the false impression that the essence of poetic diction consists in the use of artificial or unusual words. The first of all lessons to be learned in studying poetic diction is that the words available for use in poetry and prose are practically identical.

They are not, indeed, absolutely identical. For if the student's investigation has taken him into a certain ornate style of verse, such as Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur," he will have noted certain words unnatural in prose, at least in prose that is not halfway poetry. Such are archaic words, as "brand" for "sword," "bewray" for "betray," or words of new coinage, such as the verbs "dusk and shiver," "round" used as a noun in "the round of space," and compound words of many kinds. But after all we find that the vocabulary of poetry is not essentially different

from that of prose and even purely poetic words are of comparatively rare occurrence, except, of course, where the archaic style is affected deliberately.

(2) The second lesson is the use of words in a new collocation. A word that is perfectly commonplace and unimpressive in itself may be endowed with new life and suggestiveness by the context in which it is set. From a prose word it becomes poetical. It opens up a vista to the imagination, it kindles a thrill of emotion, it suggests in a flash what it would take a host of words to express explicitly. This skilful combination of words is a very important feature of poetic expression. It must be studied at length and persistently by any one who would achieve success in the use of poetic language, and examples for study may be found in every poem. But it must be borne in mind that the purpose of the study is not to stock the memory with phrases found in the poets, but to master the spirit and possibilities of the language; then the student may venture on new combinations in keeping with this spirit and under the inspiration of his own imagination and feeling.

Nothing could be more commonplace in themselves than the verbs "to float" and "to run." Now observe how they are elevated and idealized in the following lines: —

> In the golden lightening,
> Of the sunken sun
> O'er which clouds are brightening
> Thou dost *float* and *run*.
> Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.
>
> — SHELLEY, "Skylark."

If I write "the stick floats," "the boy runs," I use these words in a literal sense, stripped of all but their dictionary meaning; as used in the lines just cited, they suggest buoyancy, swiftness, lightness, joy, — and thus are endowed with poetical power.

Again, one may write, "he drew a *black* line across the page;" this is purely prosaic and matter-of-fact. Vergil writes, "*black* night robs the world of color;" this is in some degree poetical, because it carries with it a suggestion of intensity. Milton writes: —

> and, for lightning, see
> *Black* fire and horror, shot with equal rage.
> —"Paradise Lost," Book II, l. 67.

This is an eminently poetic use of the epithet, which now fills the imagination with the concept of what is portentous, menacing, horrible, baffling.

In the same way consider other words, first, as found in the dictionary or in any unimaginative context; for instance, *red — sunshine — melt — voice — trouble — gateway — slake — sunburnt — breathless.* Then examine the same words in the following poetic setting and note their new potency of suggestion.

> Vengeance arm
> His *red* right hand to plague us.
> —"Paradise Lost," Book II, l. 173.

> And young and old came forth to play
> On a *sunshine* holyday.
> —MILTON, "L'Allegro."

> To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away
> And *melts* in visions of eternal day.
> —POPE, "Eloisa to Abelard."

> The *voice* of his own soul
> Heard in the calm of thought.
> —SHELLEY, "Alastor."

> Across the margent of the world I fled
> And *troubled* the gold *gateway* of the stars.
> —F. THOMPSON, "The Hound of Heaven."

Ere Winter throws
His *slaking* snows
In thy feasting-flagon's impurpurate glows.
— F. THOMPSON, "A Corymbus for Autumn."

Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance and Provençal song and *sunburnt* mirth —
— KEATS, "Nightingale."

Like a nun
Breathless in adoration.
— WORDSWORTH, "By the Sea."

It is not the purpose to discuss how these effects are produced. Some of the words are used as implied metaphors, some depend for their power on their musical suggestiveness, some are startlingly vivid, and so flash a whole picture into the imagination by their intensity. Further examples may be found under each of these three headings, discussed in the following pages.

II. POETIC INTENSITY

A distinguishing feature of poetic diction is ***intensity.*** We call a passage poetically intense when every phrase is charged with significance. In poetry no phrase may be weakly chosen, — every phrase should tell, either by its *imaginative* or its *emotional* impressiveness.

To-night this sunset spreads two golden wings
Cleaving the western sky.
— D. G. ROSSETTI, "Sunset Wings."

In these lines every word is emphatic, and makes a demand on the imagination of the reader. It is ***imaginatively*** intense. Compare the matter-of-fact manner of expressing the same image. "To-night the sunset might impress the observer as resembling two golden wings," etc.

She lived alone, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and oh,
The difference to me.
— WORDSWORTH.

In these lines the intensity is *emotional.* The diction is simple, but every element contributes to the emotion, — at no point does the feeling sink or flag.

Let us now consider separately each of these aspects of intensity, the imaginative and the emotional, though they are actually inseparable, one reacting on the other.

1. Imaginative Intensity. — In poetic diction this shows itself by the use of the following: —

(1) *Epithets, Picturesque Verbs and Nouns, Descriptive Detail.* — Intensity creates a tendency to employ these forms of diction more profusely in poetry than in prose.

NOTE. — (*a*) They will be more intense when they not only fill the imagination but suggest the emotion proper to the piece, as in most of the examples below.

(*b*) They will serve the purpose, though with less intensity, when they describe the picturesque or realistic setting, without contributing expressly to the emotional effect, as in the first two examples.

(*c*) They will be entirely wanting in intensity and hence unpoetic if they are otiose, such as all conventional, stock-phrases, which carry no stimulus to the imagination: for instance, "the shady grove," "flowery vale," "tuneful lay," "orb of day," "crystal streams," "warbling birds," "purling brooks."

Epithets: —

> Sometimes a *curly* shepherd lad
> Or *long-haired* page *in crimson clad.*
> — TENNYSON, "Lady of Shalott."

> He, stepping down
> By *zig-zag* paths and juts *of pointed rock,*
> Came on the *shining* levels of the lake.
> — TENNYSON, "Morte d'Arthur."

Then came wandering by
A shadow *like an angel, with bright hair*
Dabbled in blood.

— "Richard III," Act I, Sc. 4, ll. 52 ff.

Suffer my singing,
Gipsy of seasons, ere thou go winging.

— F. THOMPSON, "A Corymbus for Autumn."

Descriptive Nouns and Verbs: —

Darkened so, yet shone
Above them all the Archangel; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had *intrenched;* and care
Sat on his *faded* cheek.

— "Paradise Lost," Book I, ll. 599 ff.

Fear death? —to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go.

— BROWNING, "Prospice."

Exercise. — Examine certain poems, *e.g.* Tennyson's "Palace of Art," "Lotus Eaters," "Mariana"; consider what descriptive elements contribute to the emotion of the piece, and what do not. Determine *how* the emotion is suggested by the image.

In composing descriptive verse, —

1. We should fix our eyes on the scene, real or imaginary, that we mean to describe, until we not only see it vividly, but also realize from contemplating it a single distinct impression or emotion.

2. We should aim to bring out this impression as accurately and vividly as possible, — never directly culling words or phrases from poets read, but calling on the store of expressions accumulated in our minds from continued and careful reading.

3. We should try to convey the impression intended by suggestive images rather than by naming it expressly and literally.

4. We should note that poets incessantly invest nature with interest by ascribing to it personal attributes (as "the broken sheds looked sad and strange"), or by bringing it into close association with personality (as "unlifted was the clinking latch").

(2) *Suggestive Word-Painting.* — Instead of using a multitude of details, the poet resorts to suggestion and flashes a scene upon the imagination by a single magical word or brief combination of words.[1]

Suggestive word-painting possesses a high degree of intensity because of the condensation of the expression. The danger attending its use is referred to on page 84.

Examples: —

In a drear-nighted December
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity.
— KEATS, "Happy Insensibility."

But alas!
Honeyless days and days did he let pass.
— KEATS, "Isabella."

A little, dry old man, without a star,
Not like a King. — TENNYSON, "Princess."

In the dead of darkness
The ministers for the purpose hurried thence
Me and *thy crying self.*"
— "The Tempest," Act I, Sc. 2, ll. 130 ff.

Paced beside the mere,
Counting *the dewy pebbles*, lost in thought.
— TENNYSON, "Morte d'Arthur."

[1] See also pp. 188 ff.

Jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
— "Romeo and Juliet," Act III, Sc. 5, ll. 10.

In writing descriptive verse, we should strive after suggestive combinations of words, — always bearing in mind that, while we study this feature of the poet's workmanship, we must in our own writing form the phrase with the eye on the object and the impression to be conveyed, not on the curiousness of the words. The idea is not to match together words unmatched before, but to invent a phrase that will speak suggestively to the alert imagination of a reader.

(3) *Simile and Metaphor.* — These are the crowning resource of the poet's diction. Their intensity lies in this, that two objects are thus brought together in close imaginative relationship; the poet illumines his theme, whatever it be, with the beauty that surrounds the second term of his comparison.

In every good simile and metaphor, the objects compared, besides the essential point of resemblance, will have a general emotional kinship; that is, they will be calculated to suggest the same general emotion. In point of intensity we should distinguish between —

(*a*) The simile in which the resemblance is almost entirely external and obvious, as in the first two examples below;

(*b*) The simile that appeals to little or no external resemblance, but is wholly of an emotional and imaginative character.

The latter is, of course, more intense and poetical than the former.

Simile: —

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold.
— BROWNING, "Paracelsus."

A stump of oak half dead,
From roots, like some black coil of carven snake,
Clutched at the crag, and started through mid-air
Bearing an eagle's nest.
— TENNYSON, "The Last Tournament."

O Spartan dog
More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea.
— "Othello," Act V, Sc. 2, l. 362.

She rose like an Autumnal night that springs
Out of the East. — SHELLEY, "Alastor."

in bulk as huge
As . . . . . that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream;
Him, haply, slumbering on the Norway foam
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea and wished morn delays;
So stretched out huge in length the Archfiend lay.
— "Paradise Lost," Book I, ll. 198 ff.

It may be noticed that the last simile differs from the others in this, that the second term of comparison is described at length. Sometimes totally irrelevant details are set forth in description, details that give vividness to the image, but do not emphasize the point of resemblance. This is the *Homeric Simile*, employed after Homer by Spenser, Milton, Tennyson, Arnold, and other English poets.

Metaphor: —

Mine eternal jewel
Given unto the common enemy of man.
— "Macbeth," Act III, Sc. 1, l. 68.

This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
* * * * * * *
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.
— "Richard II," Act II, Sc. 1, ll. 46 ff.

Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast —

— "Macbeth," Act II, Sc. 2, ll. 37 ff.

Yellow and black and pale and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes.

— SHELLEY, "West Wind."

Exercise. — Look for the secondary or suggested resemblances in the similes contained in your reading. Thus in the example above, *column* and *king* are alike because both are broken. Besides this essential resemblance, the column suggests the stateliness of kingship, the support that Arthur was to the fellowship of his knights, and perhaps other attributes common to both. These are felt indistinctly as we read.

In writing, avoid comparisons that are far-fetched; do not call Mary Magdalen's tears "two walking baths, — portable and compendious oceans," — nor describe a virtuous soul as "like seasoned timber." The reason why these comparisons are far-fetched is that there is no emotional relationship between the objects compared; they refuse to be associated in our feelings.

(4) *Suggested Metaphor.* — The suggested metaphor contributes to imaginative intensity. It consists, not in calling one object by the name of another ("My life is a wounded bird"), but in attributing to it qualities that, taken literally, belong to another object of a different class, as "My life has crept so long on a broken wing." Here the mark of a wounded bird is referred to human life; the comparison is suggested rather than asserted. The intensity of the suggested metaphor resides in its conciseness. It constantly runs along the line of personification, as may be seen in the following examples. Many of the effective word-combinations alluded to above are reducible to suggested metaphor.

The South shall bless, the East shall blight,
The *red-rose of the Dawn* shall blow,
The *million-lilied stream of Night*
Wide in *etherial meadows* flow.
— WATSON, "The Yew-tree."

O how shall *summer's honey breath* hold out
Against the wreckful siege of *battering days.*
— SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet 65.

As who should dare
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep.
— BROWNING, "Paracelsus."

Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow
Her clarion o'er the sleeping earth.
— SHELLEY, "West Wind."

By a Spring's
Soft and soul-melting murmurings.
— HERRICK, "To Robin Redbreast."

2. Emotional Intensity. — (1) Emotional intensity tends to express itself in certain figures of speech. The chief of these are exclamation, inversion, apostrophe, and the repetition or "echoing" of an emotional word.

Exclamation: —

O World! O Life! O Time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before.
— SHELLEY, "Threnos."

O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
— "Hamlet," Act I, Sc. 2, ll. 129 ff.

Inversion: —

Sweet after showers ambrosial air.
— TENNYSON, "In Memoriam."

When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
By each was cleaving, side by side.
— A. H. CLOUGH, "Qua Cursum Ventus."

Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves
With wild-thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown
And all their echoes moan. — MILTON, "Lycidas."

Apostrophe: —

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills and Groves,
Forbode not any severing of our loves!
— WORDSWORTH, "Intimations."

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll!
— BYRON, "Childe Harold."

Dear and great angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
— BROWNING, "The Guardian Angel."

Echoing: —

For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime;
Who would not weep for Lycidas.
— MILTON, "Lycidas."

And all the dying day might be
Immortal in its dying.
— DE VERE, "Evening Melody."

Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat. — TENNYSON, "Elaine."

(2) Emotional intensity is averse to long words or turns that have little or no emotional significance, such as *nevertheless, in spite of the fact that, indubitably;* and in general it

economizes words, charging them with significance, not spreading out the meaning over a long phrase.

Thus, if we translate Vergil's line, —

> Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito —
> Yield thou not to ills, but bolder go to meet them,

the effect is lost, partly because of the multiplication of words; but we are far nearer the original than if we should write: —

> Do not yield to ills, but with greater boldness go forth to meet them.

Similarly, we read "the moon's fitful light" instead of "the fitful light of the moon"; "I fled Him down the years," for "I fled from Him"; "'Twas a thief said the last kind words to Christ," for "It was a thief that said" —.

In the same spirit, the poet frames compound words, as "the dusty-raftered, many-cobweb'd Hall," — "a huge crag-platform" — "the light aërial gallery, golden-railed," and repeatedly so in Tennyson.

(3) But the chief thing to remember is that emotional intensity depends not upon diction alone, but upon the writer's attitude of mind.

(*a*) In narrating, his aim is, not to enumerate a series of facts or incidents, but to express his joy, admiration, wonder, sorrow, indignation, in what he narrates. Hence he does not say, *he took the sword,* but *he clutched it,* which is more energetic; not *he went in among the bulrushes,* but *plunged among the bulrush-beds ;* not *the sword flew through the air,* but *the great brand made lightnings in the splendor of the moon.* Describing a combat he does not coolly state, *Each one, hoping at a single blow to kill his antagonist, angrily aimed his spear ;* but with enthusiasm

Each at the head
Levelled his deadly aim; their fatal hands
No second stroke intend; and such a frown
Each cast at the other, as when two black clouds,
With heaven's artillery fraught, come rattling on
Over the Caspian.

— "Paradise Lost," Book II, ll. 711 ff.

(*b*) In expressing thoughts or reflections, the poet does not use explanatory language; his primary aim is not to make himself clear and explicit. He does not tell the reader his thought in precise terms, but, throwing it forth in some emotional garb, he trusts the reader to interpret it for himself.

Thus Wordsworth conceived the idea that when a man is born he brings with him into the world vague memories of something experienced before. In his poem he does not explain this, but sings of it, as a benediction: —

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, Who is our home.

— "Intimations."

So Shakespeare does not say directly and clearly that men show mercy not under compulsion but freely; he sings of it, as inspired with its sweetness and gentleness: —

The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath.

— "Merchant of Venice," Act IV, Sc. 1, ll. 184 ff.

APPENDIX III

Suggestions for Verse-Writing

1. THE chapter on versification should first be studied with care. The student should understand that a line of verse is not good merely because it can be scanned. To write musical verse he must rely eventually upon his ear, educated by persistent reading. Secondly, the metrical variations should be used sparingly, and at the beginning not at all, with the exception of "initial inversion," which is always permissible.

The following cautions will help him to escape certain elementary defects.

(*a*) Avoid parallel grammatical constructions in successive lines. The following lines are sing-song, partly for this reason.

> Here is a house of peaceful rest,
> Here is a balm for the wounded breast,
> Here fragrant flowers shed their bloom
> And heavenly rays disperse the gloom.

Keats did *not* write: —

> To bend with apples the mossed cottage trees
> And fill with kernels the ripe hazel shells.

Compare the corresponding lines in his "Ode to Autumn."

(*b*) Do not crowd heavy consonant sounds in one part of the line, as in the last part of the following: —

Who could offer the sunbloom of morn on her cheeks *to Death's drear hand to blast?*

(*c*) Do not over-ballast lines, especially when the verse should be light and easy. If Wordsworth had written: —

> Thou unassuming common-place
> Of Nature, with that homely face,
> Dowered with heaven-sent, queen-like grace,

the third line would have been over-ballasted.

(*d*) Try to vary the position of emphasis in successive lines, as explained in the chapter on Versification.

2. After the ear is well trained to English verse-music, exercises in "broken verse" will be interesting and profitable, especially as classroom work. Blank verse affords the most feasible material for this exercise, but we may use also such lines as Shelley's "Mont Blanc," and Swinburne's "Triumph of Time." A little practice in "broken verse" brings before the student the possibilities and impossibilities of word and phrase maneuvering better than could be done by any mere observation of poetical language, however protracted.

3. For many beginners rhyme proves a stumbling-block. But to rhyme with ease is a knack that may be acquired by a little practice. Write every day for a week or two, as rapidly as possible, a Spenserian stanza containing a bit of romantic description. And before doing so note that syllables containing a long vowel sound make the easiest rhymes, such as *day, fade, rain, hate, seen, isle, light, dire,* and that certain sounds, especially short vowels followed by two consonants, are sometimes dangerous, as *crisp, lost, birth,* although *ring, vest,* and *bent* are common and easy sounds.

4. After the preceding technicalities have been mastered to some extent, we may begin verse-composition proper. The first exercises should be some broad and free kind of imitation; the following may be suggested.

(*a*) The easiest beginning will be to compose brief word-pictures comprised in a single stanza, in which we aim at vividness, condensation, and suggestiveness. A ready model may be found in Tennyson's "Palace of Art," or better still in the "Pictures" of Lewis Morris, a few of which are inserted below.

(*b*) Next, longer descriptions may be attempted after the style of Tennyson's "Lotus Eaters" or Thomson's "Castle of Indolence," or Spenser's "Faerie Queene." The object now is to express ourselves first with coherence, secondly with great richness of vocabulary, and thirdly with a view to bring out a single emotional impression. The subjects should probably be of a romantic character, such as, "The Home of the Druids," "The Dance of the Elves," "The Land of Sleep," "The Stygian Shores."

(*c*) We may now pass from pure description to the more explicit expression of emotion. The simplest form will be to use some nature image to embody a feeling that we experience. Study Shakespeare's sonnets, especially Golden Treasury, XXXVIII, XV, V, also Keats's sonnet, Golden Treasury, CCXLIII, and write something similar on "Bereavement" or on the thought "I too was born to die," or on "Hope," or any emotion that comes naturally.

(*d*) Idealize some conception or experience by a sustained metaphor or comparison after the manner of Keats's sonnet "On Chapman's Homer." Themes may be suggested by "Æneas's Descent to Hades," "The Mysteries of Science," "The Air-ship."

(*e*) Take a familiar subject, such as an *oak tree* or a *child's grave*, and idealize by grouping round it several imaginative elements. We may study, first, Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper," and "The Cuckoo," and should refer to the chapter of this book on "The Imagination," where this exercise is treated.

This last exercise is, of course, difficult, and requires poetic feeling and breadth of imagination. The student who can master it with any degree of success will stand in no need of further suggestions.

PICTURES

A lurid sunset, red as blood,
Firing a sombre haunted wood;
From whose recesses, dark and fell,
One hurries with a face of Hell.

A full sun blazing with unclouded day.
  Till the bright waters mingle with the sky;
  And on the dazzling verge uplifted high
White sails mysterious slowly pass away.

The sad, slow dawn of winter; frozen trees
  And trampled snow within a lonely wood;
One shrouded form which to the city flees,
  And one, a masquer, lying in his blood.

A youthful martyr, looking to the skies
  From rack and stake, from torment and disgrace;
And suddenly heaven opened to his eyes,
  A beckoning hand, a tender, heavenly face.

—LEWIS MORRIS.

APPENDIX IV

The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England

(Scene 12)

Hubert — My masters, I have showed you what warrant I have, for this attempt. I perceive of your heavy countenance, you had rather be otherwise employed, and, for my own part, I would the King had made use of some other executioner. Only this is my comfort that a king commands, whose precepts, neglected or omitted, threateneth torture for the default. Therefore, in brief, leave me and be ready to attend the adventure. Stay within that entry, and, when you hear me cry "God save the King," issue suddenly forth, lay hands on Arthur, set him in this chair, wherein (once fast bound) leave him with me to finish the rest.

Attendants — We go, though loath.

Hubert — My Lord, will it please your honor to take the benefice of the fair evening?

(*Enter Arthur*)

Arthur — Gramercy, Hubert, for thy care of me.
In or to whom restraint is newly known,
The joy of walking is small benefit;
Yet will I take thy offer with small thanks.
I would not lose the pleasure of the eye.
But tell me, courteous keeper, if you can,
How long the king will have me tarry here.

Hubert — I know not, prince; but, as I guess, not long.
God send you freedom, and — "God save the King."

(*They issue forth*)

Arthur — Why, how now, Sirs? What may this outrage mean?
Oh, help me, Hubert, gentle keeper, help!

God send, this sudden mutinous approach
Tend not to reave a wretched, guiltless life.
Hubert — So, Sirs, depart, and leave the rest to me.
Arthur — Then Arthur yields. Death frowneth in thy face.
What meaneth this? Good Hubert, plead the case.
Hubert — Patience, young Lord, and listen words of woe,
Harmful and harsh, hell's horror to be heard,
A dismal tale, fit for a Fury's tongue.
I faint to tell, deep sorrow is the sound.
Arthur — What? Must I die?
Hubert — No news of death, but tidings of more hate,
A wrathful doom and most unlucky fate.
Death's dish were dainty at so full a feast.
Be deaf! Hear not! It's hell to tell the rest.
Arthur — Alas, thou wrongest my youth, with words of fear.
'Tis hell, 'tis horror, not for one to hear.
What is it, man? If it must needs be done,
Act it, and end it, that the pain were gone.
Hubert — I will not chant such dolour with my tongue.
Yet must I act the outrage with my hands,
My heart, my head, and all my powers beside.
Peruse this letter; lines of troubled woe.
Read all my charge, and pardon when you know.

(*Letter*)

Arthur — Ah, monstrous, damned man!
His very breath infects the elements,
Contagious venom dwelleth in his heart,
Effecting means to poison all the world.
Unreverent may I be, to blame the heavens
Of great injustice, that the miscreant
Lives to oppress the innocent with wrong.
Ah, Hubert, makes he thee his instrument
To sound the trump, that causeth hell triumph?
Heaven weeps; the saints do shed celestial tears;
They fear thy fall, and cut thee with remorse.
They knock thy conscience, moving pity there,

Willing to fence thee from the rage of Hell.
Hell, Hubert, trust me, all the plagues of Hell
Hangs on performance of this damned deed.
This seal, the warrant of the body's bliss,
Ensureth Satan chieftain of thy soul.
Subscribe not, Hubert, give not God's part away.
I speak not only, for eyes' privilege,
The chief exterior that I would enjoy;
But for thy peril, far beyond my pain,
Thy sweet soul's loss, more than my eyes' vain lack,
A cause internal and eternal too.
Advise thee, Hubert, for the case is hard
To lose salvation for a king's reward.
Hubert — My Lord, a subject dwelling in the land
Is tied to execute his king's command.
Arthur — Yet God commands, — whose power reacheth further, —
That no command should stand in force to murder.
Hubert — But that same Essence hath ordained a law,
A death for guilt, to keep the world in awe.
Arthur — I plead not guilty, — treasonless and free.
Hubert — But that appeal, my Lord, concerns not me.
Arthur — Why, thou art he that mayest omit the peril.
Hubert — Aye, if my sovereign would remit his quarrel.
Arthur — His quarrel is unhallowed, false and wrong.
Hubert — Then be the blame to whom it doth belong.
Arthur — Why, — that's to thee, if thou, as they, proceed
Conclude their judgment with so vile a deed.
Hubert — Why, then no execution can be lawful
If judges doom must be reputed doubtful.
Arthur — Yes, — where in form of law, in place and time,
The offender is convicted of the crime.
Hubert — My Lord, my Lord, this long expostulation
Keeps up more grief than promise of redress;
For this I know, and, so resolved, I end,
That subjects' lives on king's commands depend.
I must not reason why he is your foe,
But do his charge, since he commands it so.
Arthur — Then do thy charge, and charged be thy soul

With wrongful persecution done this day.
Yon rolling eyes, whose superficies yet
I do behold with eyes that nature lent,
Send forth the terror of your Mover's crown
To wreak my wrong upon the murderers,
That rob me of your fair reflecting view.
Let Hell to them (as earth they wish to me)
Be dark and direful guerdon for their guilt,
And let the black tormentors of deep Tartary
Upbraid them with this damned enterprise,
Inflicting change of tortures on their souls.
Delay not, Hubert, my orisons are ended.
Begin, I pray thee, reave me of my sight.
But, to perform a tragedy indeed,
Conclude the period with a mortal stab.
Constance, farewell! Tormentor, come away!
Make my despatch the tyrant's feasting-day.
Hubert — I faint, I fear, my conscience bids desist.
Faint, did I say? — fear was it that I named?
My king commands, that warrant sets me free.
But God forbids, and He commandeth Kings.
That Great Commander counterchecks my charge,
He stays my hand, He maketh soft my heart.
Go, cursed tools, your office is exempt.
Cheer thee, young Lord, thou shalt not lose an eye,
Though I should purchase it with loss of life.
I'll to the king, and say his word is done.

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